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ADAPTED FROM THE CLASSIC NOVEL BY H. RIDER HAGGARD
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ALL NEW MARVEL CLASSICS COMICS
GK RN

STAN LEE presents

by H. Rider Haggard

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in Bradenham Hall, Norfalk England in 1856. After attending school, he studied law and in 1877 became a master of the High Court of England during the first annexation of the Transvocal. He remained there for a number of years enjoying a successful career. However, with the eventual and not wholly unexpected cession of that land to the Dutch, Haggard returned to England. Upon arriving in his homeland, he began to read for the bar. Several years later Haggard took up the lucrative practice of novel writing and later composed many articles and books on nonfictional subjects of topical interest in his day. The concept of land and its ownership was given excellent coverage in a two volume work entitled: *Rural England* (1902). Pursuing this subject area he later wrote *The Poor and the Land* (1905) which dealt with an in-depth probe into colonial land settlement, that actually contained an overall detailed plan for national land settlement in Great Britain.

Prior to his work on land discussions, Haggard had written a number of highly popular adventure novels upon which his reputation in justly based. Haggard had travelled to exotic locales in the world and had been inspired by various habitats which formed the setting for many of his novels. Haggard was also a student of history, and two of his fictional works *Dawn* (1884) and *The Witches Head* (1885) pertained to the British defeat at Isandhlwana.

Africa held particular fascination of Haggard. *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) was inspired by the Zimbabwe ruins and three other novels: *Jess* (1887) and *Alain Quartermain* were also set in African climes. Perhaps the most famous of these rousing adventure yarns: *She* (1887) was also placed in the Dark Continent. These novels exhibit a simplicity of approach and poignancy of style that makes them unforgettable treasures to readers. His narrative technique is still as fresh today as it was over one-hundred years ago.

In 1912, Haggard received the singular honor of being knighted in England. And on May 14, 1925 he died.

MARVEL CLASSICS COMICS ™ SERIES FEATURING SHE is published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION, 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. Published bi-monthly.
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Vol. 1. No. 24,1977. Price 50¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada.
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IT IS A STRANGE AND WONDROUS TALE I TELL... SO MUCH SO THAT I AM ALMOST ASHAMED TO SET IT DOWN LEST YOU DISBELIEVE ME.
BUT EVERYTHING DESCRIBED IN THE ACCOMPANYING MANUSCRIPT, IS EXACTLY AS IT HAPPENED.
ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL BY
H. RIDER HAGGARD
SHE
AS TO SHE HERSELF, I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD. DAY BY DAY, I HAVE GREATER OCCASION TO REGRET THAT WE DID NOT BETTER AVAIL OURSELVES OF OUR OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF THAT MARVELOUS WOMAN!
--L. HORACE HOLLY

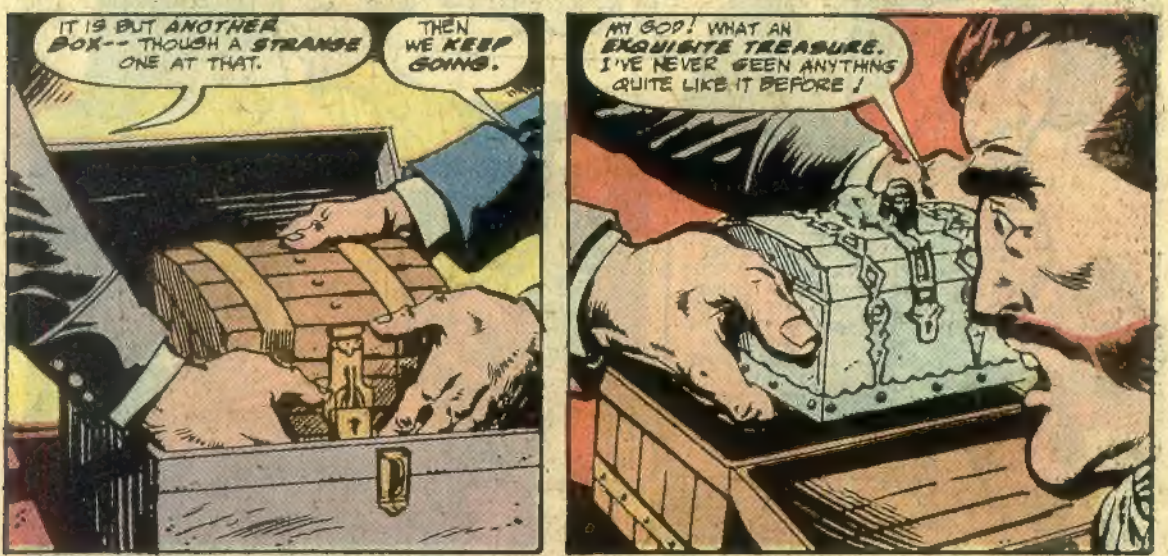
THERE ARE EVENTS WHICH SEEM TO BE GRAVEN ON THE MEMORY IN SUCH A MANNER, THAT WE CANNOT FORGET THEM. SO IT IS IN THIS CASE...
"I HAD BEEN STUDYING, PREPARING FOR MY FELLOW-SHIP EXAM IN ANOTHER WEEK, WHEN I FOUND MYSELF NEED-ING A RESPITE.
WELL, IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT I SHALL BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING WITH THE INSIDE OF MY HEAD.
IT IS CLEAR THAT I SHALL CERTAINLY NEVER DO ANYTHING BY HELP OF THE OUTSIDE OF IT, SO, BACK TO YOUR BOOKS, EH?
BUT, SUDDENLY...
NOK NOK NOK
HELLO? WHO'S THERE? IF YOU'VE COME TO BOTHER ME AT THIS UNGODLY HOUR--??
HOLLY-- IT'S ME. LET ME IN... *COUGH* *COUGH*.
WHY DID YOU KEEP ME STANDING HERE IN THE COLD? *KOF!* *KOF!*
YOU KNOW THESE DRAUGHTS ARE DEATH TO ME!
I DIDN'T KNOW WHO IT WAS. YOU ARE A LATE VISITOR.
YES, AND VERILY, I BELIEVE IT TO BE MY LAST VISIT.
I AM DONE FOR, HOLLY. DONE FOR! I DO NOT BELIEVE I WILL SEE TOMORROW!
NONSENSE! SIT DOWN! I SHALL SUMMON A DOCTOR AT ONCE.

BAH! WHAT I SAY IS SOBER SENSE. BUT I WANT NO DOCTORS! I HAVE STUDIED MEDICINE AND I KNOW ALL ABOUT MY AILMENT! NO DOCTORS CAN HELP ME.
BUT, NOW LISTEN TO ME!
WE HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR TWO YEARS, YOU AND I. HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?
I KNOW THAT YOU ARE RICH AND HAVE HAD A FANCY TO COME TO COLLEGE LONG AFTER THE AGE MOST MEN LEAVE IT.
I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN MARRIED AND THAT YOUR WIFE DIED.
AND I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN THE BEST-- INDEED, ALMOST THE ONLY-- FRIEND I HAVE EVER MADE.
WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW IS THAT I HAVE A SON. MY WIFE DIED GIVING HIM BIRTH. AS A RESULT I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO BEAR SEEING HIM. HOLLY, I WISH TO LEAVE THE BOY AS YOUR WARD!
WHAT? ME?!
I HAVE STUDIED YOU FOR TWO YEARS NOW, KNOWING I WOULD NOT LAST, HAVING CONTRACTED A SLOW, FATAL DISEASE.
THIS BOY SHALL BE THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF AN ANCIENT FAMILY. FOR I CAN TRACE MY LINEAR ANCESTRY UNBROKEN, TO ANCIENT EGYPT---
--TO A PRIEST OF ISIS NAMED KALLI-KRATES.

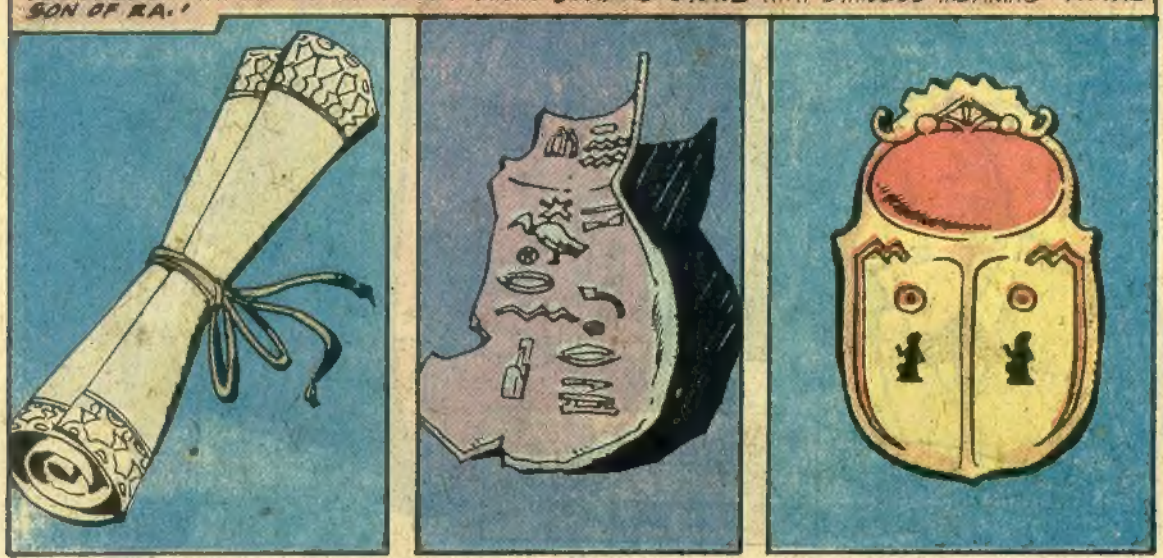
I HAVE NOT SEEN THE BOY SINCE HE WAS A BABY, BUT THEY TELL ME HE IS A QUICK AND HANDSOME CHILD.
IN THIS ENVELOPE I HAVE PUT DOWN THE COURSE I WISH YOU TO TAKE REGARDING THE BOY'S EDUCATION.
MY PRESENT INCOME IS TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED A YEAR. HALF THAT HAS BEEN SECURED FOR YOU FOR LIFE.
THE REST IS TO ACCUMULATE IN TRUST UNTIL THE BOY IS TWENTY-FIVE. THAT IS WHEN YOUR GUARDIANSHIP ENDS.
AT THAT TIME, WITH THE KEYS I WILL GIVE YOU, YOU WILL OPEN THE IRON BOX HERE AND LET HIM SEE AND READ THE CONTENTS. THEY PROPOSE A... QUEST.
HE MUST CHOOSE THEN WHETHER HE IS WILLING TO UNDERTAKE SAME. HE IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION.
IN A FEW WEEKS YOU WILL BECOME A FELLOW OF THIS COLLEGE. YOUR INCOME, COMBINED WITH THE ALLOTMENT MY WILL PROVIDES, WILL ALLOW YOU TO LIVE IN LEARNED LEISURE, AS WILL SUIT YOU.
IT WOULD BE THE VERY BEST FOR YOU. SWEAR THAT YOU WILL ACCEPT THIS TASK, MY FRIEND.
YES-- ALL RIGHT, I WILL. I SWEAR IT!
THANK YOU, HOLLY. YOU WILL BE PAID AND I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU. BUT DO NOT BETRAY MY TRUST... LEST I REACH OUT FROM THE GRAVE.

"IN THE MORNING, VINCEY WAS FOUND IN HIS ROOMS -- DEAD. IT CREATED QUITE A STIR, BUT HE WAS KNOWN TO BE VERY ILL. THERE WAS NO INQUEST.
"WHILE THE COLLEGE DID STRETCH ITS REGULATIONS SOMEWHAT, ALLOWING ME TO TAKE ON A CHILD DURING MY FELLOWSHIP, I WAS FORCED TO SEEK MORE SPACIOUS ROOMS OFF CAMPUS. THIS I DID IN SHORT ORDER, AS WELL AS FINDING A GOOD MANSERVANT, NAMED JOB, TO HELP ME LOOK AFTER THE BOY.
"AT LENGTH, THE BOY ARRIVED; AND A BEAUTIFUL BOY HE WAS, INDEED, I DON'T BELIEVE I EVER SAW SUCH A BEAUTIFUL BOY BEFORE OR SINCE. AND THOUGH THOSE FIRST FEW MOMENTS WERE AWKWARD, HE SOON BECAME USED TO BOTH HIS SURROUNDINGS -- AND ME.
"THOSE WERE DELIGHTFUL YEARS! THE CHILD GREW INTO THE BOY, AND THE BOY INTO THE YOUNG MAN. AND AS HE GREW, SO DID HIS BEAUTY AND HIS MIND. HE STUDIED HARD, AND, WHEN HE WAS EIGHTEEN, I ENROLLED LEO -- THAT WAS HIS NAME -- IN MY COLLEGE.
"I HAD ONLY ONE TROUBLE ABOUT LEO. EVERY YOUNG WOMAN HE MET, OR MOST OF THEM ANYWAY, INSISTED ON FALLING IN LOVE WITH HIM, WHICH CREATED SOME DIFFICULTIES. BUT I NEED NOT GO INTO THEM HERE.
"AND SO THE YEARS WENT BY UNTIL LEO'S TWENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY, WHICH IS WHERE THIS STRANGE AND, IN SOME WAYS, AWFUL STORY REALLY BEGINS!"

IF THAT WILL BE ALL, SIR, I SHALL LEAVE NOW.
WAIT, JOB. I SHOULD PREFER TO HAVE AN INDEPENDENT WITNESS TO THIS BUSINESS. ONE WHO CAN BE RELIED UPON TO HOLD HIS TONGUE. IF YOU DON'T MIND, LEO?
THEN, THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO BEGIN.


IT IS BUT ANOTHER BOX-- THOUGH A STRANGE ONE AT THAT.
THEN WE KEEP GOING.
MY GOD! WHAT AN EXQUISITE TREASURE. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING QUITE LIKE IT BEFORE!

"WHAT WE FOUND IN THAT SILVER CASKET, ASIDE FROM A LETTER MARKED BY OLD VINCEY FOR LEO, FORMED A CURIOUS PUZZLE INDEED. THERE WAS A ROLLED-UP PARCHMENT, A SMALL POTSHERD WITH WRITING ON IT AND A SMALL SCARAB STONE WITH SYMBOLS MEANING 'ROYAL SON OF RA.'



"HAVING DISCLOSED THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF THE CASKET, LEO **BEGAN** WITH THE LETTER FROM HIS FATHER..."

"MY SON, LEO-- WHEN YOU OPEN THIS, IF YOU EVER DO, YOU SHALL HAVE **ATTAINED MANHOOD** AND I SHALL BE LONG ENOUGH DEAD TO HAVE **BEEN FORGOTTEN** BY NEARLY EVERYONE.

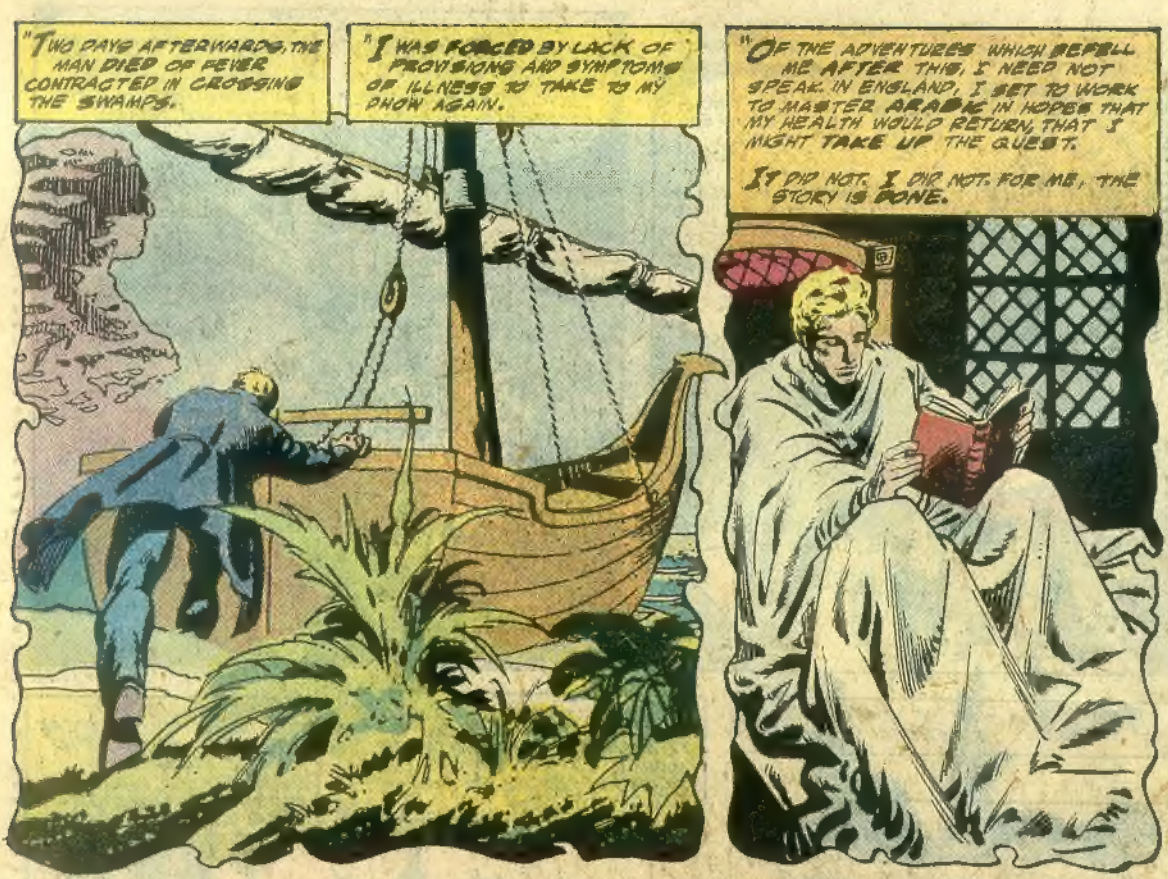
"HOLLY, MY FRIEND, WILL HAVE **TOLD YOU** SOMETHING OF THE EXTRAORDINARY ANTIQUITY OF YOUR **ANCESTRY**. THE CONTENTS OF THIS CASKET SHALL **PROVE** IT.
THE STRANGE **LEGEND** INSCRIBED UPON THE POTSHERD OF YOUR ANCIENT ANCESTRESS WAS **TOLD ME** BY MY FATHER ON HIS DEATHBED AND IT CAPTURED MY IMAGINATION.

"WHEN I WAS ONLY 18 YEARS OF AGE, I SET OUT TO **VERIFY** THIS LEGEND.

"ON THE COAST OF **AFRICA**, IN A HITHERTO **UNEXPLORED REGION**, THERE IS A CURIOUS PEAK WHICH TOWERS UP IN THE SHAPE OF A **HEAD**.

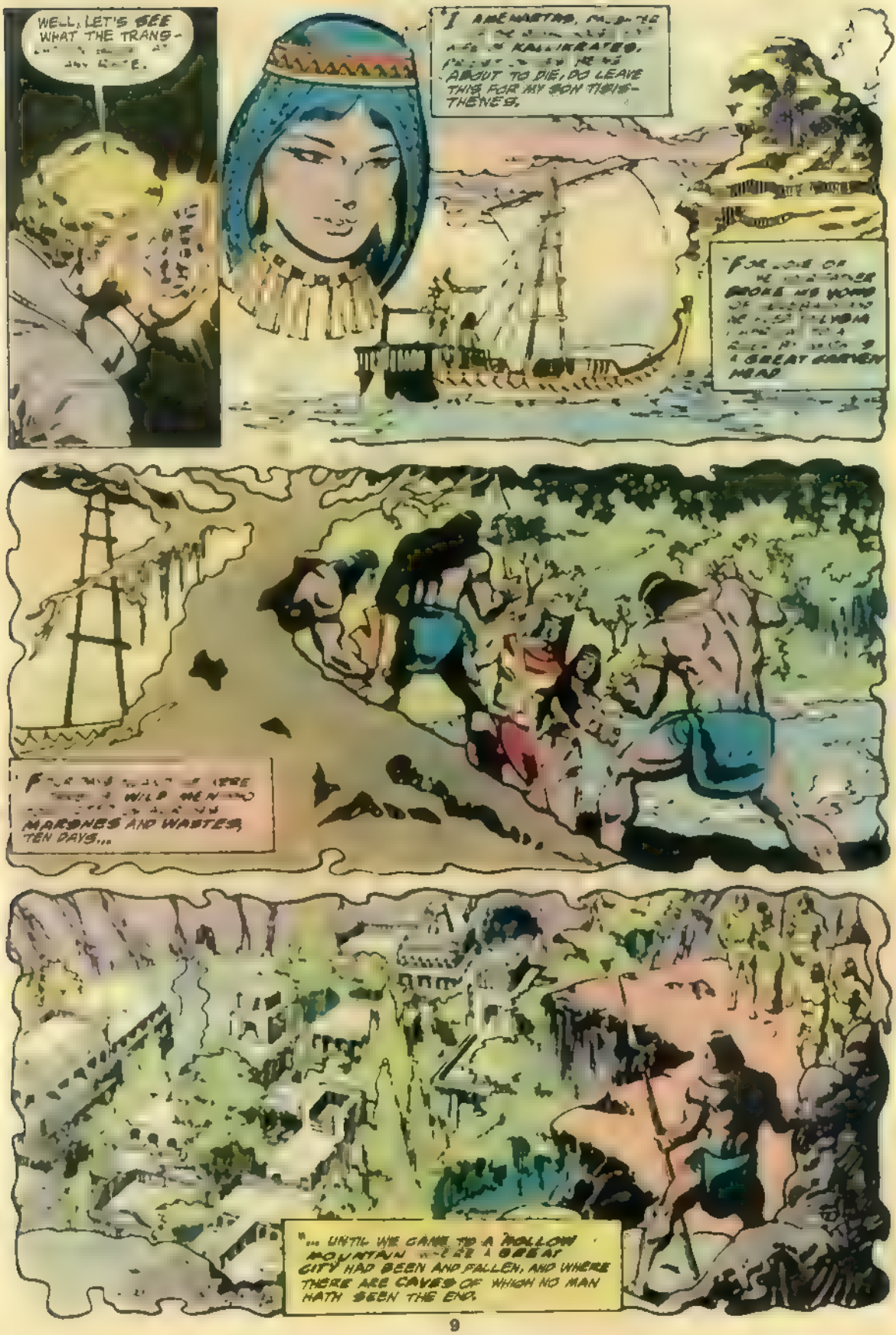
"THERE I LANDED AND I LEARNT FROM A **WANDERING** NATIVE THAT FAR INLAND WERE MOUNTAINS SHAPED LIKE CUPS, SURROUNDED BY VAST SWAMPLAND.

"AND I LEARNT THAT PEOPLE THERE **SPEAK** A DIALECT OF **ARABIC** AND ARE RULED BY A **BEAUTIFUL WHITE WOMAN** WITH POWER OVER LIFE AND DEATH.

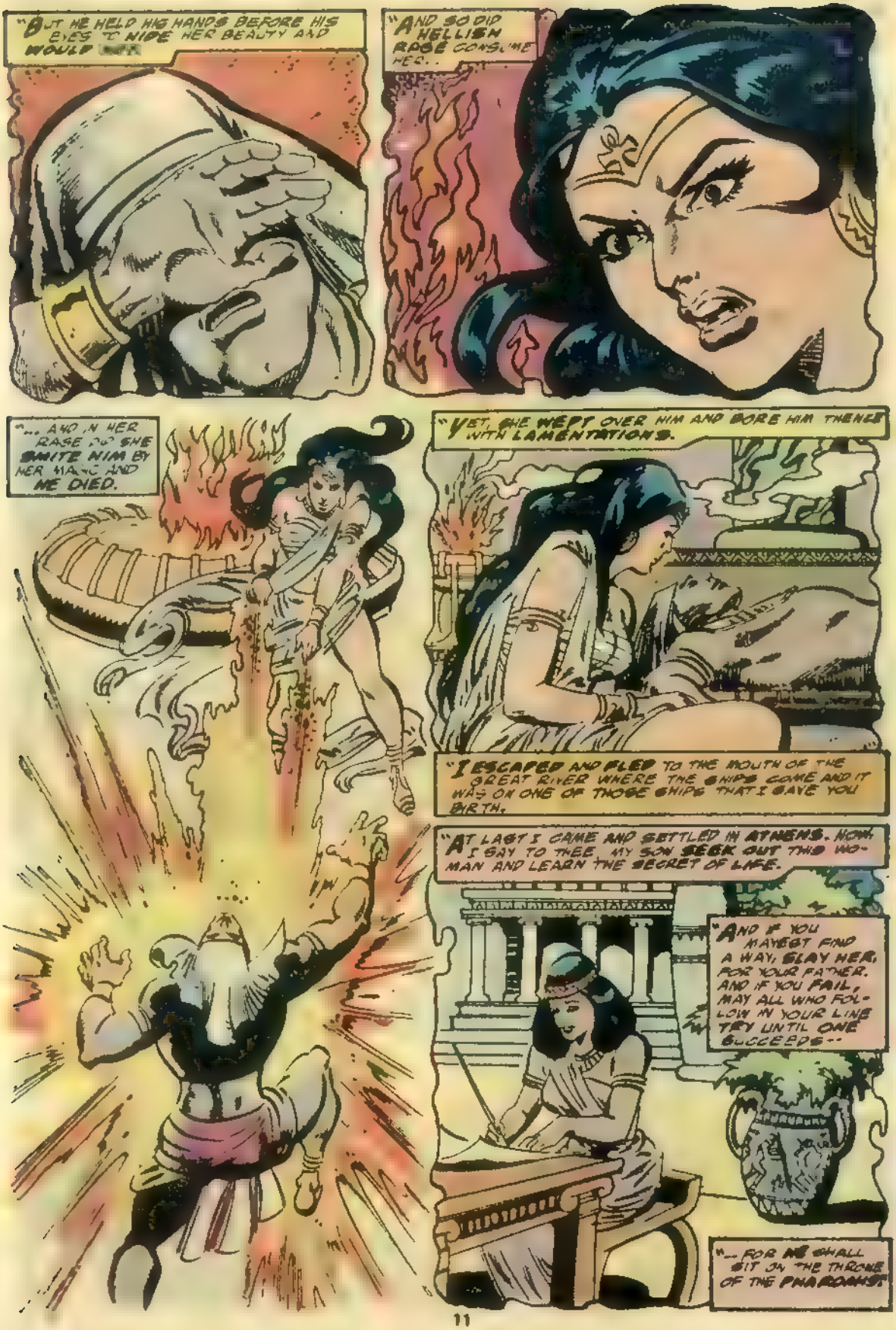

"TWO DAYS AFTERWARDS, THE MAN DIED OF FEVER CONTRACTED IN CROSSING THE SWAMPS.
"I WAS FORCED BY LACK OF PROVISIONS AND SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS TO TAKE TO MY DHOW AGAIN.
"OF THE ADVENTURES WHICH BEFELL ME AFTER THIS, I NEED NOT SPEAK. IN ENGLAND, I SET TO WORK TO MASTER ARABIC IN HOPES THAT MY HEALTH WOULD RETURN, THAT I MIGHT TAKE UP THE QUEST.
IT DID NOT. I DID NOT. FOR ME, THE STORY IS DONE.

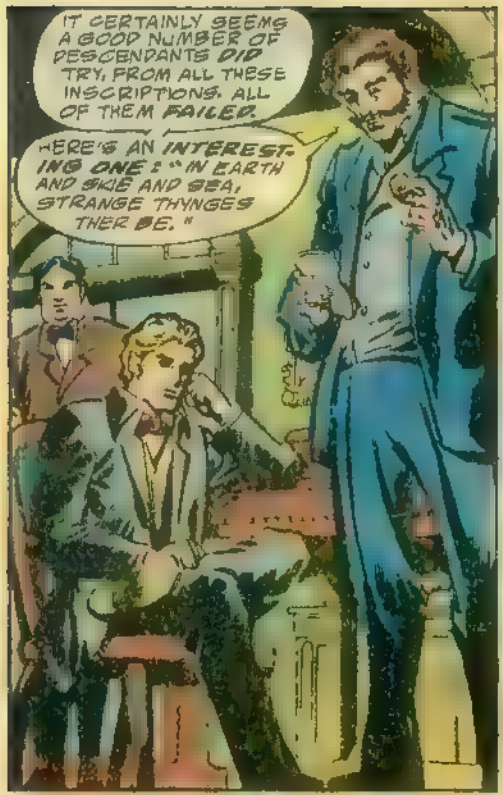
"FOR YOU, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT ENDED. YOU MUST JUDGE FOR YOURSELF THE VALIDITY OF THIS. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS A FABLE. IF YOU CHOOSE TO AGREE, I HAVE PROVIDED THAT YOU WON'T WANT FOR MEANS. BUT IF YOU ARE SATISFIED IT IS A MERE CHIMERA, DESTROY ALL I HAVE GIVEN YOU. PERHAPS THAT IS WISEST. FOR IF YOU DO TAKE UP THE QUEST, REMEMBER ONE THING ALWAYS-- HE WHO WOULD TAMPER WITH THE VAST AND SECRET FORCES THAT ANIMATE THE EARTH MAY WELL FALL VICTIM TO THEM. -- FAREWELL!"

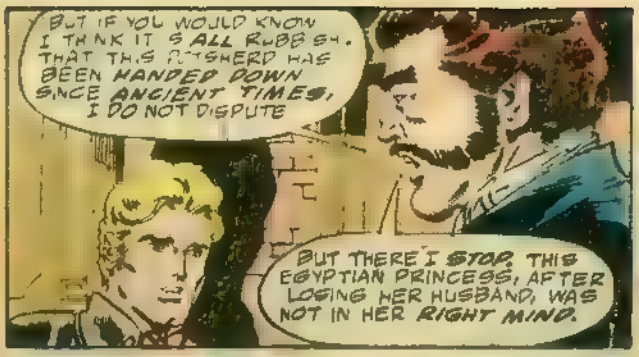
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HE MEANT BY THAT, UNCLE HOLLY?
I SUPPOSE THE TRANSLATION OF THE POTSHERD WILL TELL MORE.
BUT IT ALL SOUNDS LIKE RUBBISH -- THE PHANTASMS OF A DESERTED MAN AT HIS END, POOR FELLOW.

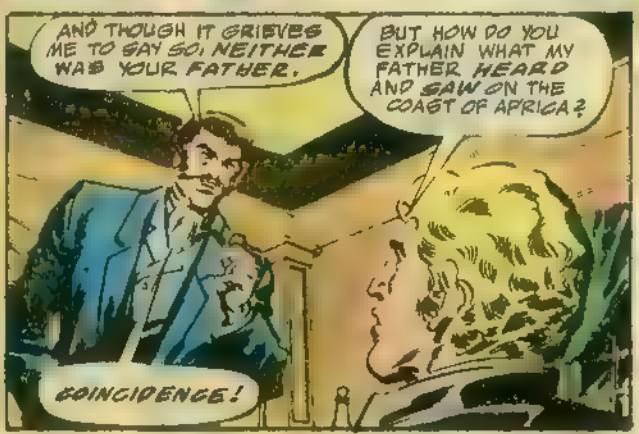

WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT THE TRANS-
I ARE MASTER, [illegible] KALLIKRATES, [illegible] ABOUT TO DIE; DO LEAVE THIS FOR MY SON THEMISTHENES.
FOR [illegible] BROKE HIS WAND [illegible] A GREAT SERPENT HEAD
[illegible] WILD MEN MARSHES AND WASTES, TEN DAYS...
"... UNTIL WE CAME TO A HOLLOW MOUNTAIN [illegible] A GREAT CITY HAD BEEN AND FALLEN, AND WHERE THERE ARE CAVES OF WHICH NO MAN HATH SEEN THE END.

"AND THEY BROUGHT HE TO THEIR QUEEN, WHO WAS A MAGICIAN HAVING A KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THINGS, AND LIFE AND LOVELINESS THAT DOES NOT DIE.
"SHE!
AND SHE CAST THE EGG OF LOVE UPON YOUR FATHER AND KISSED HIM.
"THIS IS THE CAVE OF ANCIENT EVIL WHERE DARK MAGIC IS MADE AND WHERE THE GREAT PIT IS..
"... AND STOOD BY THE DOOR AS A PILLAR OF LIFE
"... AND SHE DID STAND IN THE FLAMES...
"... AND SAVED HER UNHARMED AND YET MORE BEAUTIFUL.
THE GODDESS GAVE TO HER FATHER AS IT HAD SAVED HER AND GIVE HERSELF FOR HIM.
"... AND SO I WAS BORN BY SLAYING ME!


"BUT HE HELD HIS HANDS BEFORE HIS EYES TO HIDE HER BEAUTY AND WOULD [illegible]
"AND SO DID HELLISH RAGE CONSUME HER..
"... AND IN HER RAGE SHE SMITE HIM BY HER MAGIC AND HE DIED.
"YET SHE WEPT OVER HIM AND BORE HIM THENCE WITH LAMENTATIONS.
"I ESCAPED AND FLED TO THE MOUTH OF THE GREAT RIVER WHERE THE SHIPS COME AND IT WAS ON ONE OF THOSE SHIPS THAT I GAVE YOU BIRTH.
"AT LAST I CAME AND SETTLED IN ATHENS. NOW I SAY TO THEE, MY SON SEEK OUT THIS WOMAN AND LEARN THE SECRET OF LIFE.
"AND IF YOU MAYEST FIND A WAY, SLAY HER, FOR YOUR FATHER. AND IF YOU FAIL, MAY ALL WHO FOLLOW IN YOUR LINE TRY UNTIL ONE SUCCEEDS--
"... FOR HE SHALL SIT ON THE THRONE OF THE PHARAOHS!

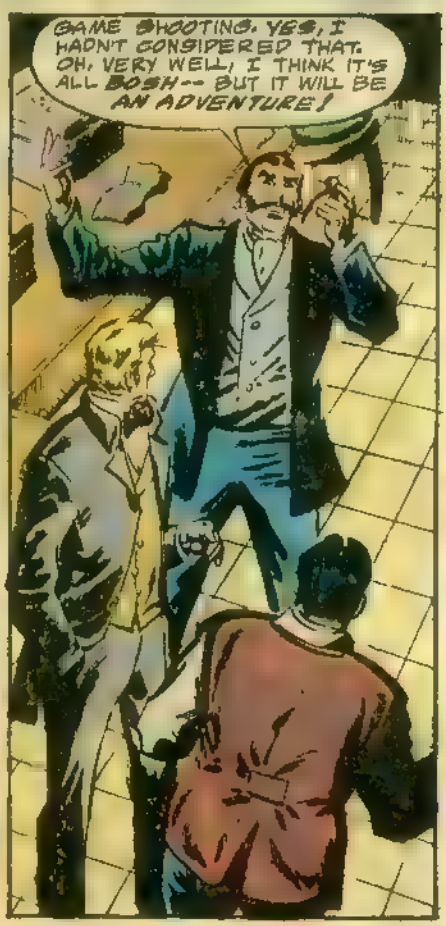

IT CERTAINLY SEEMS A GOOD NUMBER OF DESCENDANTS DID TRY, FROM ALL THESE INSCRIPTIONS. ALL OF THEM FAILED.
HERE'S AN INTERESTING ONE: "IN EARTH AND SKIE AND SEA, STRANGE THYNGES THER BE."


BUT IF YOU WOULD KNOW I THINK IT'S ALL RUBBISH. THAT THIS POTSHERD HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, I DO NOT DISPUTE
BUT THERE I STOP. THIS EGYPTIAN PRINCESS, AFTER LOSING HER HUSBAND, WAS NOT IN HER RIGHT MIND.

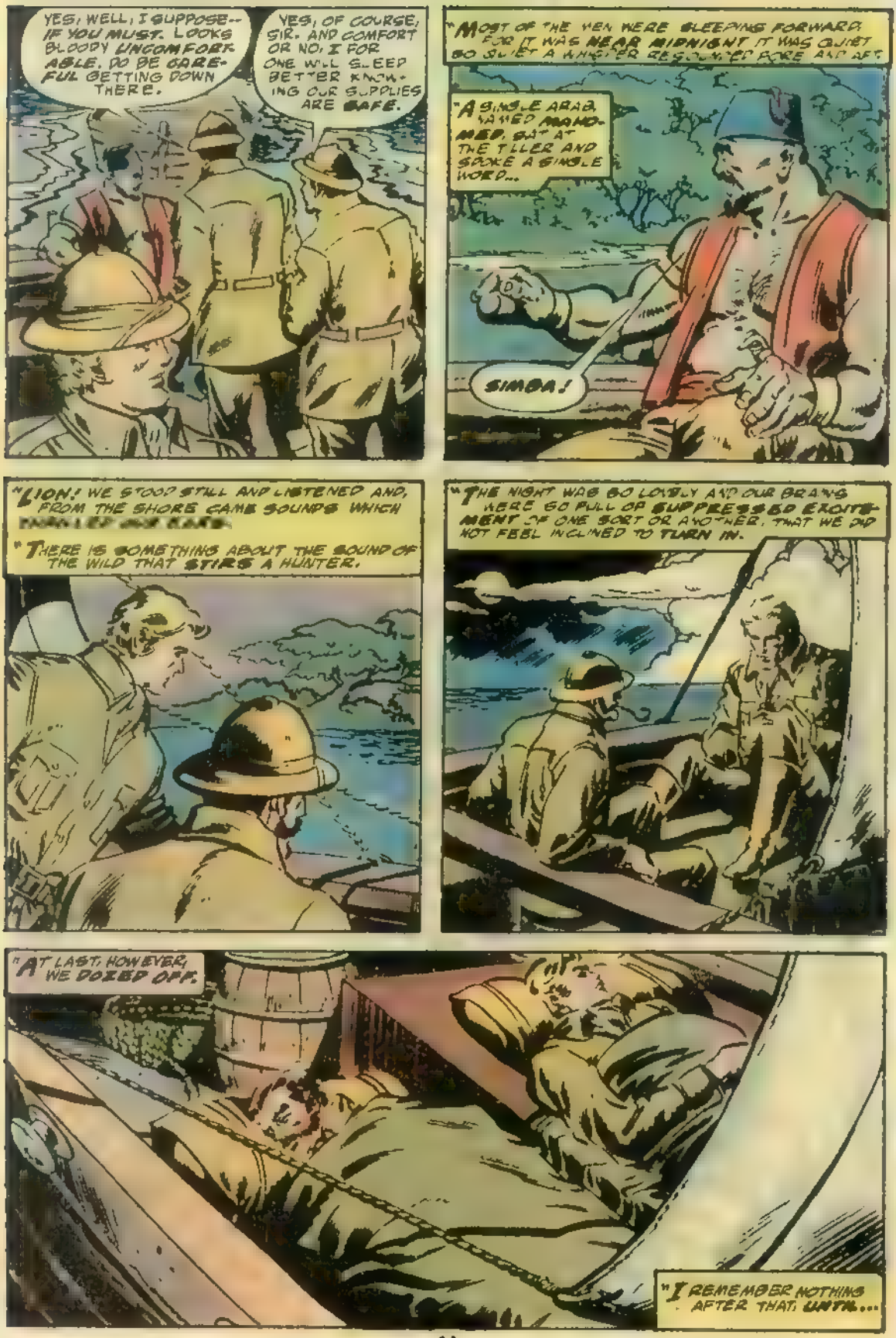

AND THOUGH IT GRIEVES ME TO SAY SO, NEITHER WAS YOUR FATHER.
BUT HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN WHAT MY FATHER HEARD AND SAW ON THE COAST OF AFRICA?
COINCIDENCE!

NO DOUBT THERE IS JUST SUCH A ROCK FORMATION ON THE COAST OF AFRICA; AND A LOT OF PEOPLES THERE SPEAK VARIATIONS OF ARABIC.
AND I DARE SAY AFRICA HAS QUITE A NUMBER OF MARSHLANDS.
PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. I HAVE NO OPINION.

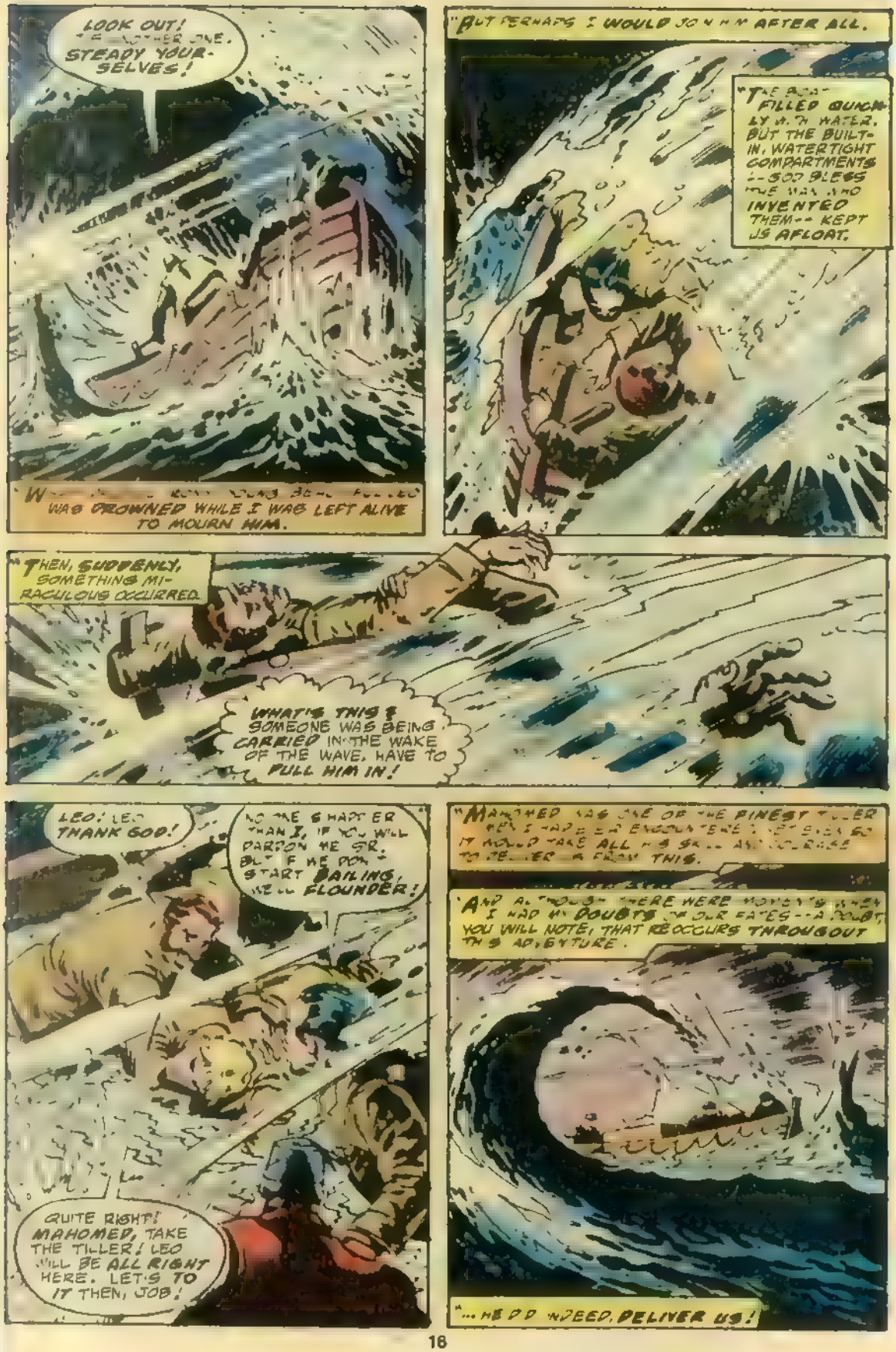
I INTEND TO GET THE MATTER TO REST ONCE AND FOR ALL, AND IF YOU DO NOT GO WITH ME, I WILL GO ALONE.
AND, EVEN IF I DON'T FIND THE "ROLLING PILLAR OF LIFE", I SHALL AT LEAST ENJOY SOME FIRST CLASS SHOOTING.


GAME SHOOTING. YES, I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT. OH, VERY WELL; I THINK IT'S ALL BOSH -- BUT IT WILL BE AN ADVENTURE!

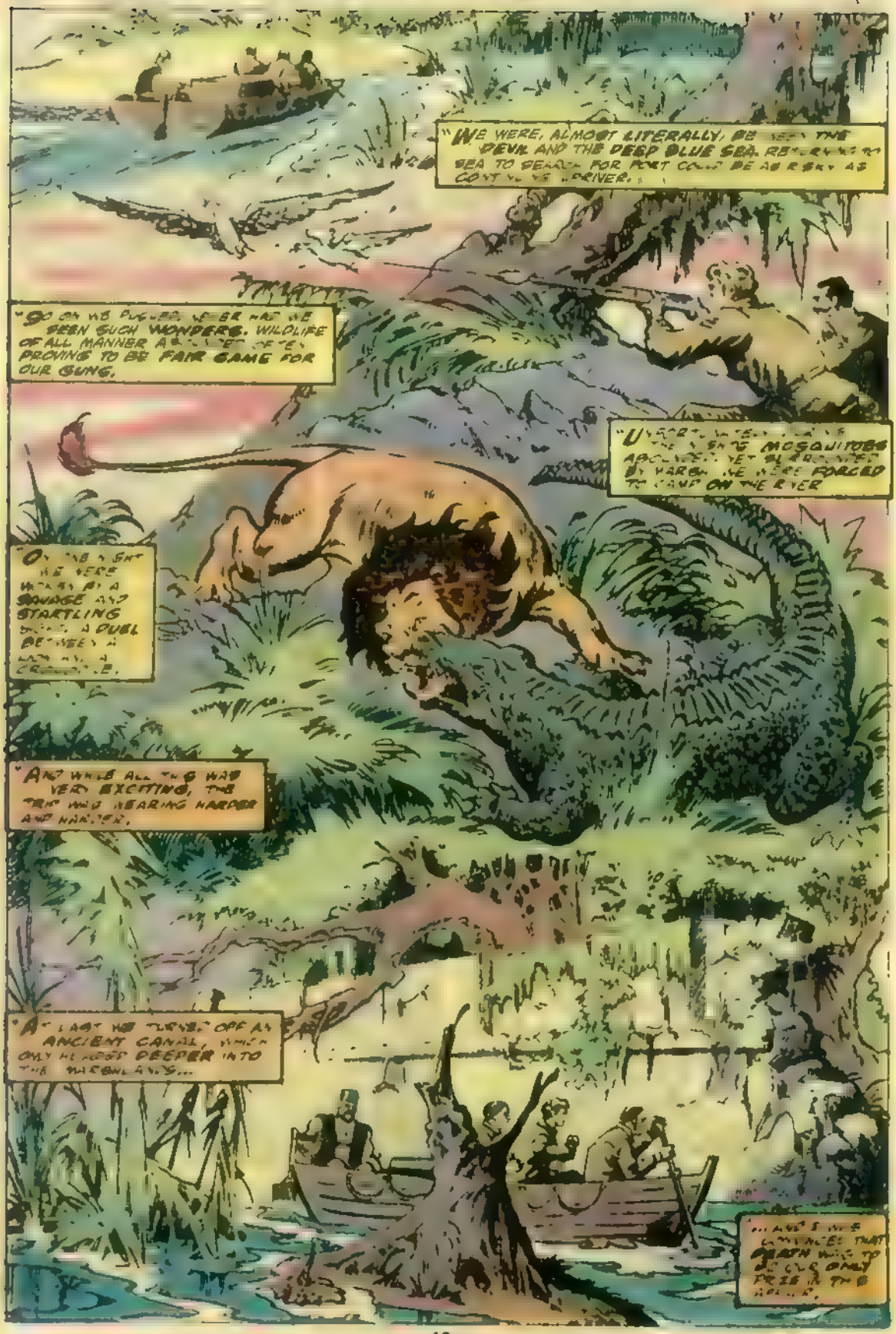
"AND SO IT WAS THAT, IN THREE MONTHS TIME, WE WERE ON THE OCEAN BOUND FOR ZANZIBAR.
"HOW DIFFERENT A SETTING THIS WAS. GONE THE QUIET COLLEGE ROOMS, THE WIND-SWAYED ENGLISH ELMS, REPLACED BY A GREAT OCEAN GLEAMING IN SHADED SILVER LIGHTS BENEATH A FULL AFRICAN MOON.
TOMORROW, BY TEN, IF THE CAPTAIN IS NOT OUT ON HIS RECKONING, WE SHOULD MAKE THIS "MAN" ROCK WHERE WE CAN BEGIN OUR SHOOTING.
TO BEGIN LOOKING FOR THE FIRE OF LIFE, DON'T YOU MEAN, UNCLE!
HAH!
SIR, THE WHALE-BOAT-- I THINK SOMEONE SHOULD SLEEP ON IT. TO SAFE-GUARD ALL OUR GUNS AND SUPPLIES THERE.
"THE WHALEBOAT, I SHOULD EXPLAIN, WAS SPECIALLY BUILT FOR US AT DUNDEE IN SCOTLAND. WE KNEW THAT THIS COAST IS A NETWORK OF CREEKS AND WE NEEDED SOMETHING THAT COULD NAVIGATE THEM.
"IT WAS SPECIALLY EQUIPPED WITH WATER-TIGHT STORAGE COMPARTMENTS FOR GUNS AND AMMO AND OTHER SUCH ESSENTIALS.

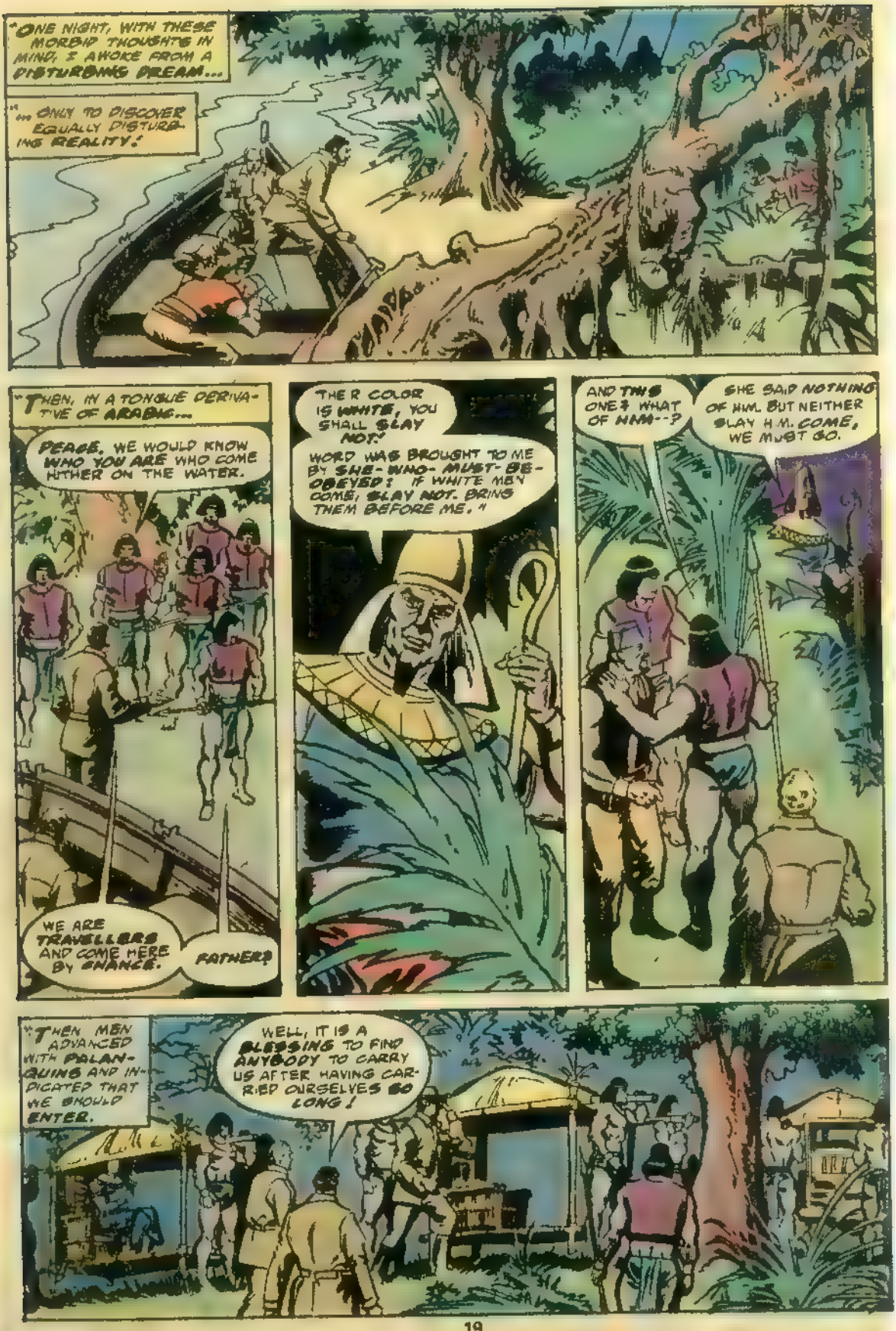

YES, WELL, I SUPPOSE-- IF YOU MUST. LOOKS BLOODY UNCOMFORTABLE. DO BE CAREFUL GETTING DOWN THERE.
YES, OF COURSE, SIR. AND COMFORT OR NO, I FOR ONE WILL SLEEP BETTER KNOWING OUR SUPPLIES ARE SAFE.
"MOST OF THE MEN WERE SLEEPING FORWARD, FOR IT WAS NEAR MIDNIGHT. IT WAS QUIET SO QUIET A WHISPER RESOUNDED FORE AND AFT.
"A SINGLE ARAB, NAMED MAHOMED, SAT AT THE TILLER AND SPOKE A SINGLE WORD...
SIMBA!
"LION! WE STOOD STILL AND LISTENED AND, FROM THE SHORE CAME SOUNDS WHICH
"THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE SOUND OF THE WILD THAT STIRS A HUNTER.
"THE NIGHT WAS SO LOVELY AND OUR BRAINS WERE SO FULL OF SUPPRESSED EXCITEMENT OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER, THAT WE DID NOT FEEL INCLINED TO TURN IN.
"AT LAST, HOWEVER, WE DOZED OFF.
"I REMEMBER NOTHING AFTER THAT, UNTIL...

"... A FRIGHTFUL ROAR OF WIND, A SHRIEK OF TERROR FROM THE ARAB CREW AND A PELTING STING OF WATER AGAINST OUR FACES!
"WE WERE CAUGHT IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF A VIOLENT SQUALL, WITH WAVES, SOME OF THEM, TWENTY FEET HIGH. THE DHOW, NOT PREPARED, WAS FILLING WITH WATER FAST.
HOLLY! SIR! YOU MUST GET OFF THERE AT ONCE! THE DHOW IS GOING DOWN!
JUMP!
--- THE ARAB--
NEVER MIND HIM! WHERE'S LEO?
WHY I DON'T KNOW -- I MEAN...
... HE-HE'S STILL ON THE SHIP, SIR!
MY GOD, NO! IT CAN'T BE!
LEO! LEO! ANSWER ME, LAD!

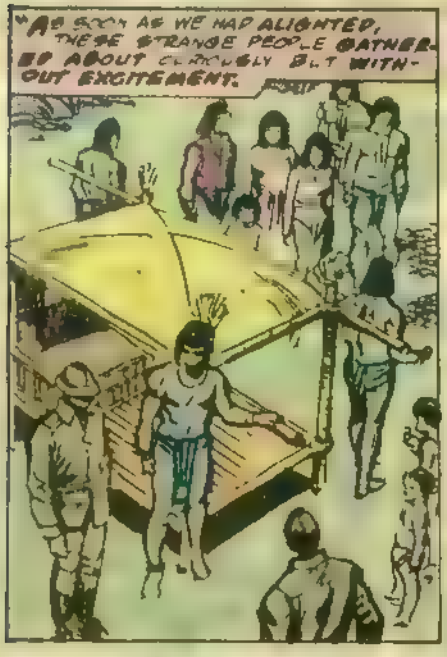

LOOK OUT! THE OTHER ONE. STEADY YOUR-SELVES!
WAS DROWNED WHILE I WAS LEFT ALIVE TO MOURN HIM.
"BUT PERHAPS I WOULD JOIN HIM AFTER ALL.
"THE BOAT FILLED QUICKLY WITH WATER, BUT THE BUILT-IN, WATERTIGHT COMPARTMENTS -- GOD BLESS THE MAN WHO INVENTED THEM -- KEPT US AFLOAT.
"THEN, SUDDENLY, SOMETHING MIRACULOUS OCCURRED.
WHAT'S THIS? SOMEONE WAS BEING CARRIED IN THE WAKE OF THE WAVE. HAVE TO PULL HIM IN!
LEO! LEO THANK GOD!
NO ONE'S HAPPIER THAN I, IF YOU WILL PARDON ME SIR, BUT IF HE DON'T START BAILING, WE'LL FLOUNDER!
QUITE RIGHT! MAHOMED, TAKE THE TILLER! LEO WILL BE ALL RIGHT HERE. LET'S TO IT THEN, JOB!
"MAHOMED WAS ONE OF THE FINEST TILLERMEN I HAD EVER ENCOUNTERED. IT GOES SO IT WOULD TAKE ALL MY SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE TO STEER A PATH THRU THIS.
"AND ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MOMENTS WHEN I HAD MY DOUBTS ON OUR FATES -- A DOUBT, YOU WILL NOTE, THAT RECCURS THROUGHOUT THIS ADVENTURE.
"... HE DID INDEED, DELIVER US!

"AT LENGTH THE STORM PASSED AND, SOME HOURS LATER THE HERALDS OF THE ROYAL SUN HAD DONE THEIR WORK.
"IT WAS THEN, AS WE APPROACHED A RIVER MOUTH, THAT I STARTED. FOR THERE ON A SPIT THE ENTRANCE WAS THE MEAD.
WHY, IT'S THE HEAD SPOKEN OF IN THE WRITING. THEN THE WHOLE STORY MUST BE TRUE.
NOT AT ALL. WE KNEW OF THE HEAD YOUR FATHER SAW IT. IT PROVES NOTHING.
HA! HA! THE SKEPTIC TO THE END. WILL YOU BELIEVE WHEN SEEING THIS GODDESS WITH YOUR OWN EYES?
AND NOT A SCIENT BEFORE!
"IT WAS HARD TO JUDGE FROM A DISTANCE, BUT THE RIVER MOUTH PROVED PASSABLE ENOUGH.
THE BANKS WERE MARSHY, REEKINGLY SO, AND CROWDED WITH CROCODILES LYING ON THE MUDDY SHORE LOGS
"A MILE OR SO AHEAD OF US HOWEVER LAY WHAT APPEARED TO BE A STRIP OF FIRM LAND AND FOR THIS WE STEERED.
THIS PLACE HAS BEEN A WHARF!
NONSENSE. WHO WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO BUILD A WHARF IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE INFERNAL MARSHES?
THEN TELL ME THAT IS NOT A MOORING RING SET INTO STONE-WORK.
"I WANTED TO SAY 'NONSENSE' AGAIN BUT THE WORD STUCK IN MY THROAT THERE WAS NO OTHER EXPLANATION.


"WE WERE, ALMOST LITERALLY, BE[illegible] THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA. RETURNING TO SEA TO SEEK[illegible] PORT COULD BE AS RISKY AS CONTINUING UPRIVER."
"SO ON WE PUSHED, NEVER HAD WE SEEN SUCH WONDERS. WILDLIFE OF ALL MANNER AND[illegible] PROVING TO BE FAIR GAME FOR OUR GUNS.
"UNDER[illegible] MOSQUITOES APPEARED. YET UNDAUNTED BY HARSH[illegible] WERE FORCED TO CAMP ON THE RIVER
"ON[illegible] WE WERE WITNESS TO A SAVAGE AND STARTLING [illegible] A DUEL BETWEEN A[illegible]
"AND WHILE ALL THIS WAS VERY EXCITING, THE TRIP WAS BEARING HARDER AND HARDER.
"AT LAST WE TURNED OFF AN ANCIENT CANAL, WHICH ONLY ALMOST DEEPER INTO THE MARSHLANDS...
...AND I WAS CONVINCED THAT DEATH WAS TO BE OUR ONLY PRIZE IN THIS[illegible]


"ONE NIGHT, WITH THESE MORBID THOUGHTS IN MIND, I AWOKE FROM A DISTURBING DREAM...
"...ONLY TO DISCOVER EQUALLY DISTURBING REALITY."
SWISH...
"THEN, IN A TONGUE DERIVATIVE OF ARABIC...
PEACE. WE WOULD KNOW WHO YOU ARE WHO COME HITHER ON THE WATER.
WE ARE TRAVELLERS AND COME HERE BY CHANCE.
FATHER?
THE R COLOR IS WHITE, YOU SHALL SLAY NOT."
WORD WAS BROUGHT TO ME BY SHE-WHO-MUST-BE-OBEYED: IF WHITE MEN COME, SLAY NOT. BRING THEM BEFORE ME."
AND THIS ONE? WHAT OF HIM--?
SHE SAID NOTHING OF HIM. BUT NEITHER SLAY HIM. COME, WE MUST GO.
"THEN MEN ADVANCED WITH PALANQUINS AND INDICATED THAT WE SHOULD ENTER.
WELL, IT IS A BLESSING TO FIND ANYBODY TO CARRY US AFTER HAVING CARRIED OURSELVES SO LONG!

"AS THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT, I SUCCUMBED TO THE RHYTHM OF THE PALANQUIN AND FELL INTO SLEEP.
"WHEN I AWOKE I WAS GREETED BY A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT...
"... THE HOME OF THE AMAHAGGER, AS I LEARNED THESE PEOPLE WERE CALLED."


"AS SOON AS WE HAD ALIGHTED, THESE STRANGE PEOPLE GATHERED ABOUT CURIOUSLY BUT WITHOUT EXCITEMENT.

"LEO'S TALL ATHLETIC FORM AND IMMACULATE GRECIAN FEATURES HOWEVER, DID ATTRACT ADMIRATION.
"AND WHEN HE REVEALED HIS GOLDEN LOCKS THERE AROSE A MURMUR OF ADMIRATION.

"THEN, A MOST UNUSUAL THING...

HUH? OHHH!
WHY-- THE HUGGEY!

NOW, NOW, JOE. OBVIOUSLY THESE PEOPLE FOLLOW THE CUSTOMS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS. WE MUSN'T BE IMPOLITE.

"WE WOULD LATER LEARN THAT, BY AMAHAGGER TRADITION, LEO HAD JUST MARRIED THE GIRL.

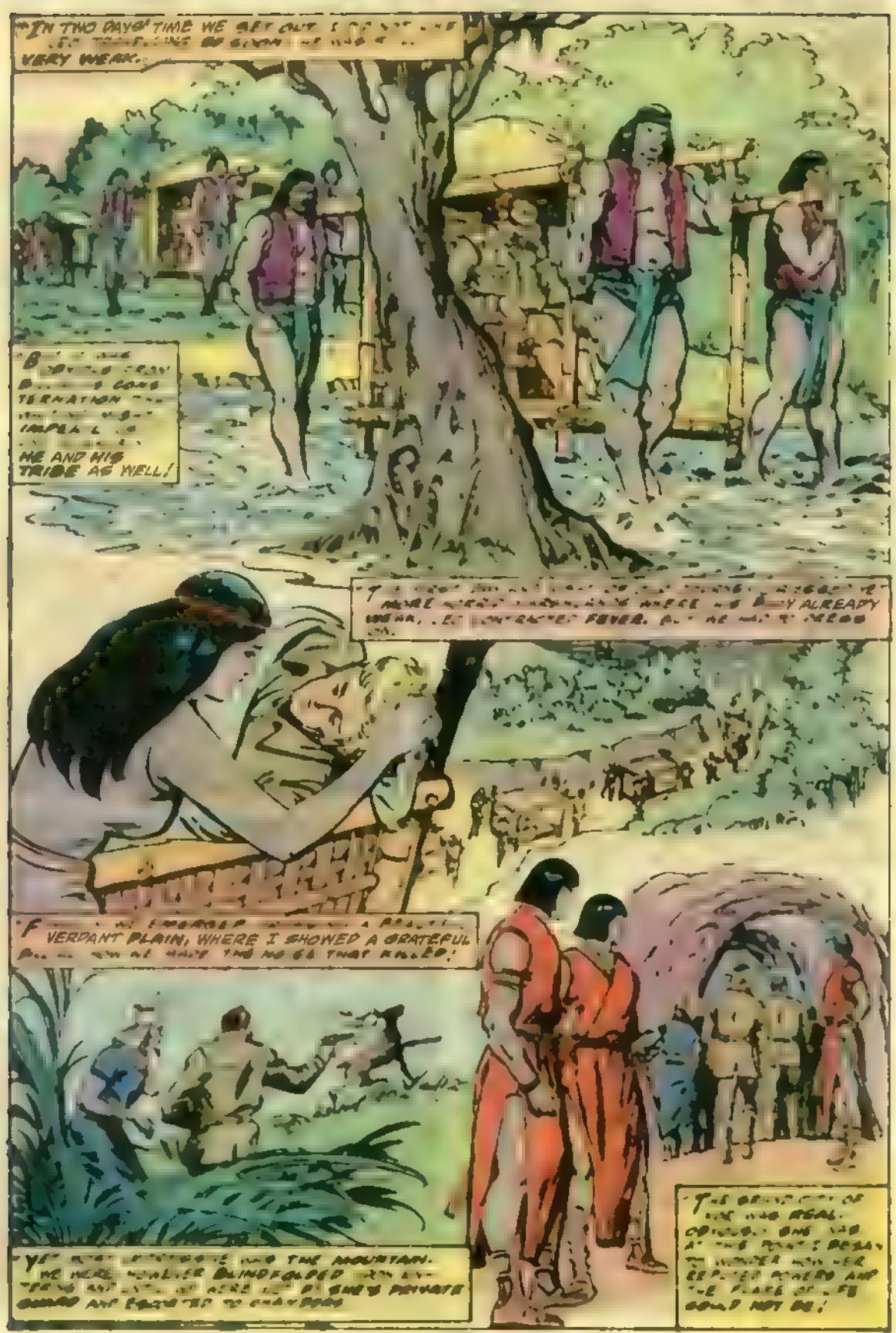
"USTANE AS WE LEARNED LATER HIS NAME FOLLOWED US INTO THE CAVES AND, IN FACT, WAS LEO'S CONSTANT SHADOW AFTER THAT.
"WE WERE LED [illegible] A LONG PASSAGE AND UPON EMERGING MY SENSES WERE EVEN MORE ASTOUNDED.
"THESE WERE NOT NATURAL CAVES BY ANY MEANS. THESE WERE HAND CARVED.
"WE WERE THEN SEATED IN A SMALL HOLLOW AND BROUGHT FOOD.
"WE WERE ALL STARVING AND NEVER, I THINK, HAVE I EATEN WITH SUCH SATISFACTION.
"WHAT HAS HAPPENED IS MARVELOUS. WE HAVE HEARD LEGENDS OF A PEOPLE AS FAIR AS YOU, BUT NEVER HAVE WE HOSTED SUCH.
THOUGH I WILL CONFESS WHEN YOU WERE FIRST OBSERVED, I PUT OUT ORDERS FOR YOUR DEATHS... AS TRESPASSERS.
IT WAS THEN, FORTUNATELY, THAT SHE, ALSO OBSERVING YOUR COMING ORDERED YOU SPARED.
BUT IN HEARING SOME OF YOUR PEOPLE TALK, I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT SHE DWELLS FAR OFF.
HOW THEN DID SHE OBSERVE US...?
ARE THERE NONE IN YOUR LAND WHO CAN SEE WITHOUT EYES HEAR WITHOUT EARS?
ASK NO QUESTIONS. SHE KNEW.

HOWEVER I HAVE RECEIVED NO FURTHER WORD. I MUST TRAVEL TO SHE FOR CONSULTATION.
HOPEFULLY THE JOURNEY WILL REQUIRE NO MORE THAN FIVE DAYS.
YOU WILL BE MADE AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE IN THE MEANTIME. I'VE TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU. I PRAY SHE WILL SPARE YOU.
BUT I MUST BE HONEST. SINCE THE TIME OF MY GRANDMOTHER AND BEFORE...
...EVERY STRANGER WHO WANDERED HERE WAS PUT TO DEATH BY PERSONAL COMMAND OF SHE!
LATER, LEFT ALONE, EXCEPT FOR LEO'S WOMAN OF COURSE...
WELL, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT ALL, UNCLE?
I DON'T KNOW--IT'S QUITE BAFFLING. USTANE CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING OF THIS SHE?
SHE? SHE IS OUR QUEEN, THOUGH WE RARELY SEE HER. IT IS SAID THAT SHE IS IMMORTAL AND HAS RULED THIS LAND THROUGH THE AGES.
MUCH MORE I CANNOT SAY. BUT SHE IS POWERFUL AND TO DENY HER WISHES IS TO DIE.

"THE NEXT FOUR DAYS WAITING FOR THE OLD MAN, BILLALI, PASSED UNEVENTFULLY -- THAT IS, UNTIL THE FEAST
"FROM THE BEGINNING I FELT SOMETHING WRONG. I SAW HERE A COLT PISTOL.
"AT LAST I HAVE OUT JOB TWO HAD PREDICTED AND SEE A HUNTING KNIFE.
"IT WAS A GLORIOUS FEAST, THAT SO FAR AS I COULD SEE NOTHING MY FOOD.
ONLY A STRANGE HARSH BUT NOT UNPLEASANT FERMENTED
"ONE OTHER GIRL PASSED ME THROUGH AT THE
"UNCEREMONIOUSLY MARCHED AND BROUGHT TO THE MAN FLIRTING
"YES, UNTIL THAT
"BUT MORE HARDNED
FEAR.
"THE GIRLS SHRIEKINGLY...
MY GOD, SIR, THEY SEEM TO KILL HARDENED.
"I JUMPED UP WITHOUT HESITATION AND FIRED."
KA-BAM!
KA-

"UNFORTUNATELY THE BULLET PASSED THROUGH THE WOMAN AND KILLED MAHOMED AS WELL!"
"A FOOT THERE WAS THE SILENCE OF ASTONISHMENT, THEN A THE NEXT MOMENT...
SEIZE THEM. KILL THEM!
WE CAN'T RUN. WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT.
WELL AND GOOD UNCLE. BUT I THINK THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT BUT OUR END. BUT GO DOWN FIGHTING WE SHALL.
"RELUCTANTLY, I HAD TO AGREE WITH LEO, THOUGH WE DID OURSELVES RIGHT PROUD, BUT THE ODDS WERE FAR TOO GREAT.
"THE LAST THING I SAW AS I WENT DOWN WAS THE AMAHAGGER TRYING TO KILL LEO AND USTANE TRYING TO PROTECT HIM...
"... AND A SINGLE, BOOMING VOICE!
HALT!
"THEN I CAME INTO DARKNESS...
"... AND FOR ALL I KNEW INTO OBLIVION!

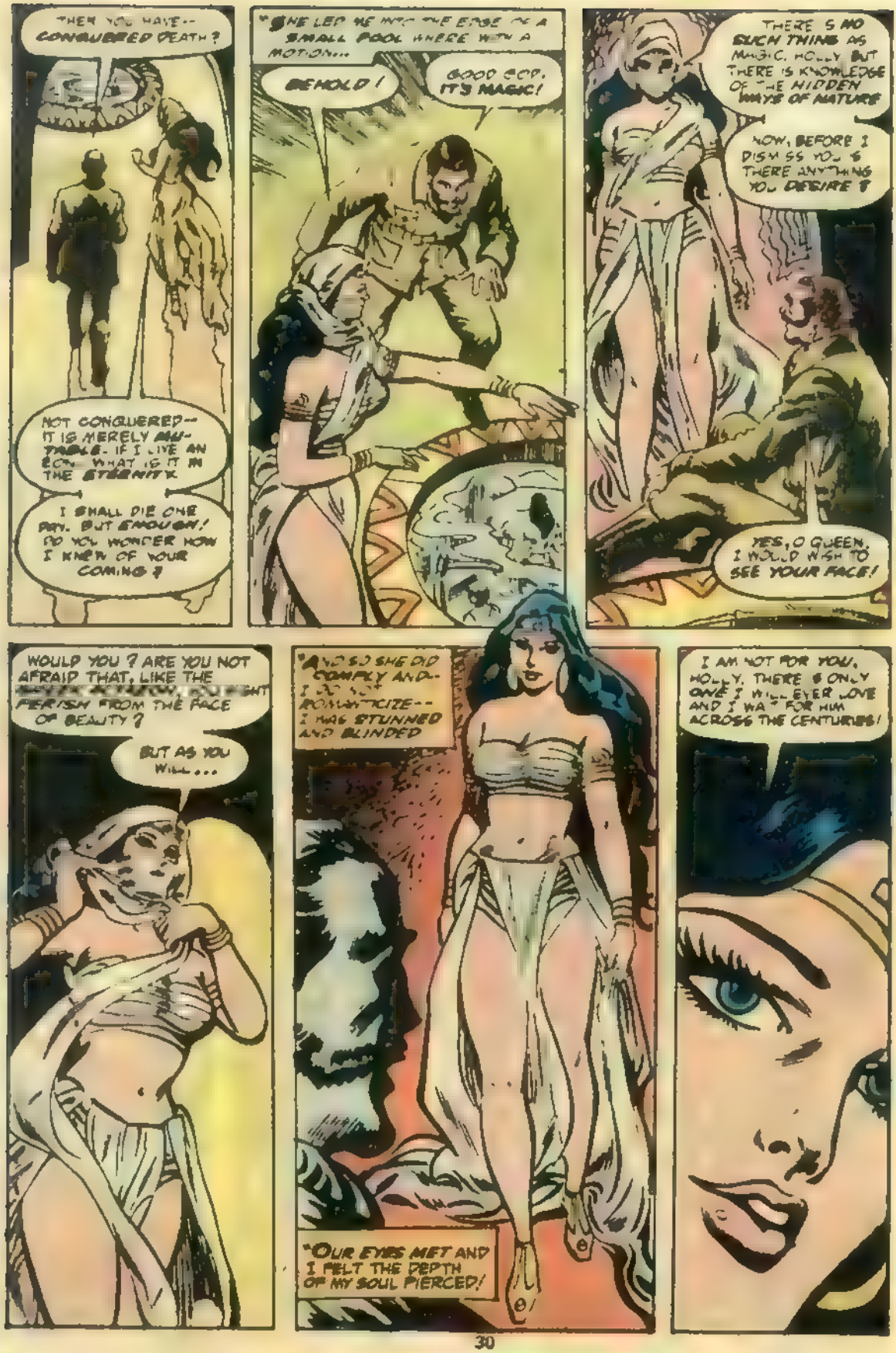
HOWEVER I WAS SAVED FROM SUCH TREACHERY FOR MY FINAL SHOUT HAD BELONGED TO THE TRUE KING BILLIAL.
SO, YOU WAKEN, MY SON. IT IS GOOD. WE MUST NOT LOSE OUR VALIANT WARRIORS TO PLOTS AND INTRIGUE
AND YOU AND YOU ALL WERE SO FEW AGAINST SO MANY THE YOUNG KING HERO WAS WOUNDED SEVERELY AT FIRST STRONG AND TRUE
AS FOR THE JACKALS WHO BETRAYED HIM AND THEN FLED THE VENGEANCE OF THE KING WILL NOT DIE EASY MY SON!
BUT TELL ME MY SON THE BABOON HOW WERE THE TEN WITH TINY HOLES KILLED?
I WAS TOLD YOU MADE A NOISE AND THEY FELL DEAD.
I WILL GLADLY TELL YOU -- BUT WHEN WE ARE MORE RESTED. MORE, I WILL SHOW YOU. WE WILL HUNT GAME TOGETHER.
YES REST. YOU MUST GET WELL FOR YOU ARE PART OF THE LEGEND OF KOR BY COMMAND OF SHE!
"THE COMMAND OF SHE. I OBEY BUT IT WAS NOT A RESTFUL SLEEP
"AND I AM NOT SURE THAT REGAIN SLEEP NOW NOT AS I RETURN TO THE WORLD UPON WHO DONE WITH...
"... ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!


IN TWO DAYS' TIME WE SET OUT
VERY WEAK.
HE AND HIS TRIBE AS WELL!
VERDANT PLAIN, WHERE I SHOWED A GRATEFUL
YET
THE GREAT GOD OF THE SKY REGAL-
PLACE OF LIFE

"FOR SOME TIME WE WERE LEFT ON OUR OWN. AFTER EXCHANGING CLOTHES (BROUGHT WITH US FROM THE WHALEBOAT) AND EATING, I ATTENDED THE DESPERATELY FEVERISH LEO.
AH, MY SON THE BARBOON IS NO SO MUCH THE BARBOON AS HE WAS.
IT IS WELL, FOR YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED INTO THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE OF SHE. COME.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD FEEL HONORED. WELL, LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
"I WAS CONDUCTED TO THIS QUEEN'S CHAMBER WHEREUPON BILLIALI DID A MOST CURIOUS THING...
BILLIALI, WHAT ON EARTH...?
DOWN, DOWN, MY SON, I BEG OF YOU. WE ARE BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF SHE!
IF YOU ARE NOT HUMBLE, SHE WILL SLAY YOU WHERE YOU STAND!
BAH! I WILL NOT! I TOO HAVE MY PRIDE!
THIS QUEEN HAS PUT US THROUGH SOME DISCOMFORT. BECAUSE OF HER IMPATIENCE LEO MAY BE DYING OF FEVER. NO I WILL NOT 'HUMBLE' MYSELF!

WELL I MAY CALL THIS VALIANT FROM IN THE PACE OF THE UNKNOWN FACED QUICKLY AS A LINEN
"SHE!
WHY ARE YOU SO FRIGHTENED STRANGER? DOES MY PRESENSE INSPIRE SUCH?
IT IS YOUR BEAUTY WHICH MAKES ME FEAR O QUEEN.
I SEE THAT MEN STILL KNOW HOW TO BEGUILE WOMEN WITH FALSE WORDS.
BUT, COME, I FORGIVE YOU YOUR LIE. THERE IS MUCH I WOULD LEARN FROM YOU.
BILLIAL WAS CURTLY SENT FROM THE ROOM, THEN...
AND WHAT DO THEY CALL YOU, STRANGER?
THE AMAHAGGER CALL ME 'BABBOON' FOR REASONS THAT SHOULD BE SELF-EVIDENT. BUT IN MY OWN LAND I AM CALLED HOLLY.
HOLLY? I LIKE THAT. PLEAGE, ST-- I WOULD NOT SEE YOU CRAWL BEFORE ME. I AM WEARY OF SLAVES: THEIR [illegible] AND THEIR TERROR.
BUT TELL ME, HOLLY, HOW DO YOU COME TO SPEAK ARABIC?
I HAVE STUDIED IT AS WELL AS LATIN AND GREEK O QUEEN.
ARE...YOU THEN ARABIC?

I AM BY BIRTH AN ARAB OF THE ARABS, OF THE RACE OF YARAB, SON OF KAHTAN IN THE FAR CITY OF OZAL.
BUT I AM MORE TRULY A DAUGHTER OF THE MED TERRANEAN.
I WAS A PHILOSOPHER, AND I TRAVELED. THAT IS NOT IMPORTANT WHY.
I TRAVELED THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE HEBREW WHO CAST ME OUT WITH STONES BECAUSE OF MY TEACHINGS.
AND I TRAVELED AMONG THE GREEKS AND EGYPTIANS DOES EGYPT STILL STAND AS IT IS RULED BY A SPAWN OF THE PERSIAN OGNUS?
WHAT? THAT WAS OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO! WHAT CAN YOU KNOW OF THE PERSIAN ANTAXERXES?
I WOULD GUESS THERE REMAIN SECRETS UPON THE EARTH OF WHICH YOU KNOW LITTLE
DO YOU BELIEVE CREATIONS DIE? NAY! THERE IS NO DEATH, ONLY CHANGE!
DO YOU NOT WONDER WHY I REMAIN HERE AMONGST SAVAGES? IT IS BECAUSE I WAIT FOR THE ONE I LOVE.
LONG AGO HE WAS SLAIN BY E... AND HERE, ONE DAY, IN REBIRTH, HE SHALL RETURN.
AND HERE I SHALL WAIT THROUGH THE AGES TAKE AN EON.


THEN YOU HAVE-- CONQUERED DEATH?
NOT CONQUERED-- IT IS MERELY MUTABLE- IF I LIVE AN EON WHAT IS IT IN THE ETERNITY.
I SHALL DIE ONE DAY. BUT ENOUGH! DO YOU WONDER HOW I KNEW OF YOUR COMING?
"SHE LED ME INTO THE EDGE OF A SMALL POOL WHERE WITH A MOTION...
BEHOLD!
GOOD GOD, IT'S MAGIC!
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MAGIC, HOLLY BUT THERE IS KNOWLEDGE OF THE HIDDEN WAYS OF NATURE
NOW, BEFORE I DISMISS YOU IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DESIRE?
YES, O QUEEN, I WOULD WISH TO SEE YOUR FACE!
WOULD YOU? ARE YOU NOT AFRAID THAT, LIKE THE [illegible] YOU MIGHT PERISH FROM THE FACE OF BEAUTY?
BUT AS YOU WILL...
"AND SO SHE DID COMPLY AND-- I DO NOT ROMANTICIZE-- I WAS STUNNED AND BLINDED
"OUR EYES MET AND I FELT THE DEPTH OF MY SOUL PIERCED!
I AM NOT FOR YOU, HOLLY. THERE IS ONLY ONE I WILL EVER LOVE AND I WAIT FOR HIM ACROSS THE CENTURIES!

"I AM NOT SURE EXACTLY HOW I FOUND MY WAY BACK TO MY QUARTERS. MY MIND WAS RATHER IN A DAZE.

"BUT AS THE NIGHT PRESSED ON, MY HEAD WAS TOO PREOCCUPIED TO ALLOW SLEEP.

"SO I BEGAN TO WANDER UP AND DOWN, THINKING

"I TRIED EVERYTHING BUT I COULD NOT GET THIS MODERN DAY CIRCE OUT OF MY MIND.

"GOD, I THINK I WAS IN LOVE WITH HER!

"AT ONE POINT I PEERED IN ON LEO.

"HE WAS NOT WELL AT ALL AND POOR LISTLESS SEER, BESIDE HERSELF WITH GRIEF.

"BUT STILL I COULDN'T SLEEP, SO I CONTINUED WANDERING EVER DEEPER INTO THE LABRYNTH OF CAVES, SCARCELY NOTING WHERE I WAS GOING.

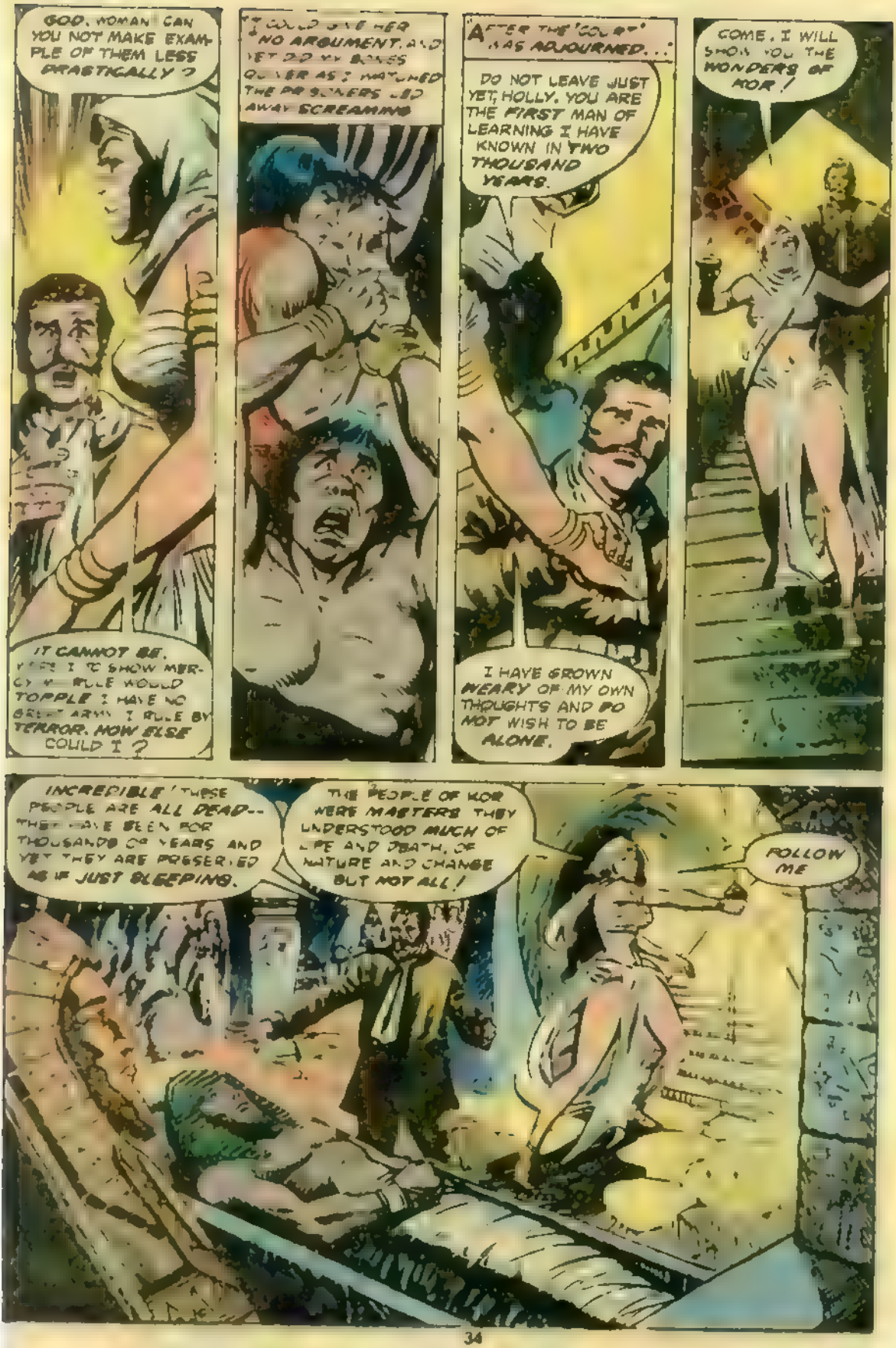
"THEN, SUDDENLY, MY LAMP WENT DARK. I HAD FOOLISHLY WANDERED TOO LONG FOR MY SUPPLY OF OIL.

"IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BLACK AS PITCH, BUT AT THE END OF A LONG PASSAGE...

"...A LIGHT. AND A VOICE.

"IT WAS SHE. AGAIN HER RAGE LASHED MY EYE, BUT NOT THE TIME BY FORCE OF HER BEAUTY
"THOUGH THE BEAUTY WAS THERE I WAS TWISTED BY AGONY AND RAGE.
CURSE HER! ACCURSED BE THE MEMORY OF THE EGYPTIAN!
CURSE HER, THE DAUGHTER OF THE NILE -- BECAUSE OF HER BEAUTY AND BECAUSE SHE HELD MY BELOVED FROM ME.
ALAS, WHERE IS THE USE OF CURSING? WHO CAN REACH THOSE WHO SLEEP BENEATH THE WINGS OF POWER?
TWO THOUSAND YEARS I HAVE WAITED AND ENDURED, BUT THOUGH THE CREEPS EVER ONWARD MEMORY HAS NOT LESSENED.
MY LOVE MY KALLI-KRATES! WHEN SHALL YOU RETURN?
OH, WHY COULD I NOT HAVE DIED WITH YOU, WHO SLEW YOU?
BUT I MUST ONCE MORE LOOK UPON YOUR FACE, MY LOVE.
"WITH THAT, SHE BEGAN TO UNWRAP THE DREADFUL CORPSE -- A SPECTACLE I WAS NOT ABLE TO WITNESS
"BESIDES WHICH, I MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO BE CAUGHT SPYING.

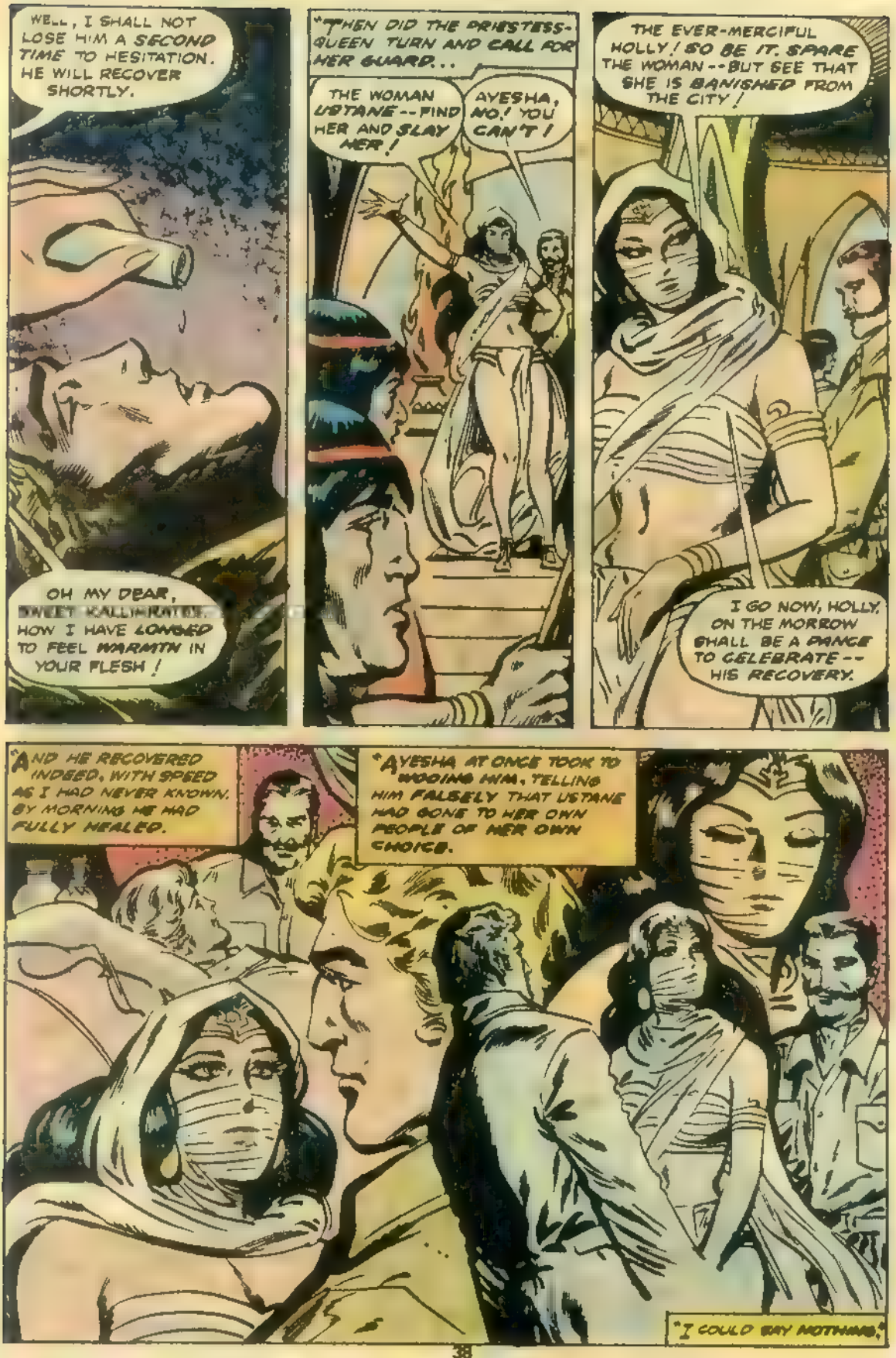
ON THE MORNING, I MORE GROGGILY, FOR IT HAD TAKEN LONG TO PULL MY WAY BACK THROUGH THE DARK.
AFTER LOOKING IN ON LEO, WHO IN NO WAY SHOWED IMPROVEMENT, I WAS ONCE MORE SUMMONED TO SHE...
AH, HOLLY COME! SIT AT MY FEET AND SEE THE JUSTICE OF SHE UPON THOSE WHO DID WRONG YOU AND DISOBEY ME!
DO YOU, OH MY GUEST RECOGNIZE THESE MEN?
THAT I DO. IT WAS THEY WHO SET TO KILL OUR SERVANT AND DID AFTERWARDS TRY TO KILL US.
YOU HAVE HEARD. HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SAY?
THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD SAY, DOGS AND SERPENTS!
YOU HAVE DISOBEYED THE WILL OF SHE!
YOU SHALL BE TAKEN TO THE CAVE OF TORTURE, AND ANY WHO STILL LIVE ON THE MORROW'S DAWN SHALL THEN BE SLAIN!


GOD, WOMAN! CAN YOU NOT MAKE EXAMPLE OF THEM LESS PRACTICALLY ?
IT CANNOT BE. IF I TO SHOW MERCY MY RULE WOULD TOPPLE ! HAVE NO GREAT ARMY I RULE BY TERROR. HOW ELSE COULD I ?
IT COULD GIVE HER NO ARGUMENT. AND YET DO MY BONES QUIVER AS I WATCHED THE PRIESTESS LED AWAY SCREAMING
"AFTER THE 'COURT' WAS ADJOURNED..."
DO NOT LEAVE JUST YET, HOLLY. YOU ARE THE FIRST MAN OF LEARNING I HAVE KNOWN IN TWO THOUSAND YEARS.
I HAVE GROWN WEARY OF MY OWN THOUGHTS AND DO NOT WISH TO BE ALONE.
COME. I WILL SHOW YOU THE WONDERS OF KOR !
INCREDIBLE ! THESE PEOPLE ARE ALL DEAD-- THEY HAVE BEEN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS AND YET THEY ARE PRESERVED AS IF JUST SLEEPING.
THE PEOPLE OF KOR WERE MASTERS THEY UNDERSTOOD MUCH OF LIFE AND DEATH, OF NATURE AND CHANGE BUT NOT ALL !
FOLLOW ME

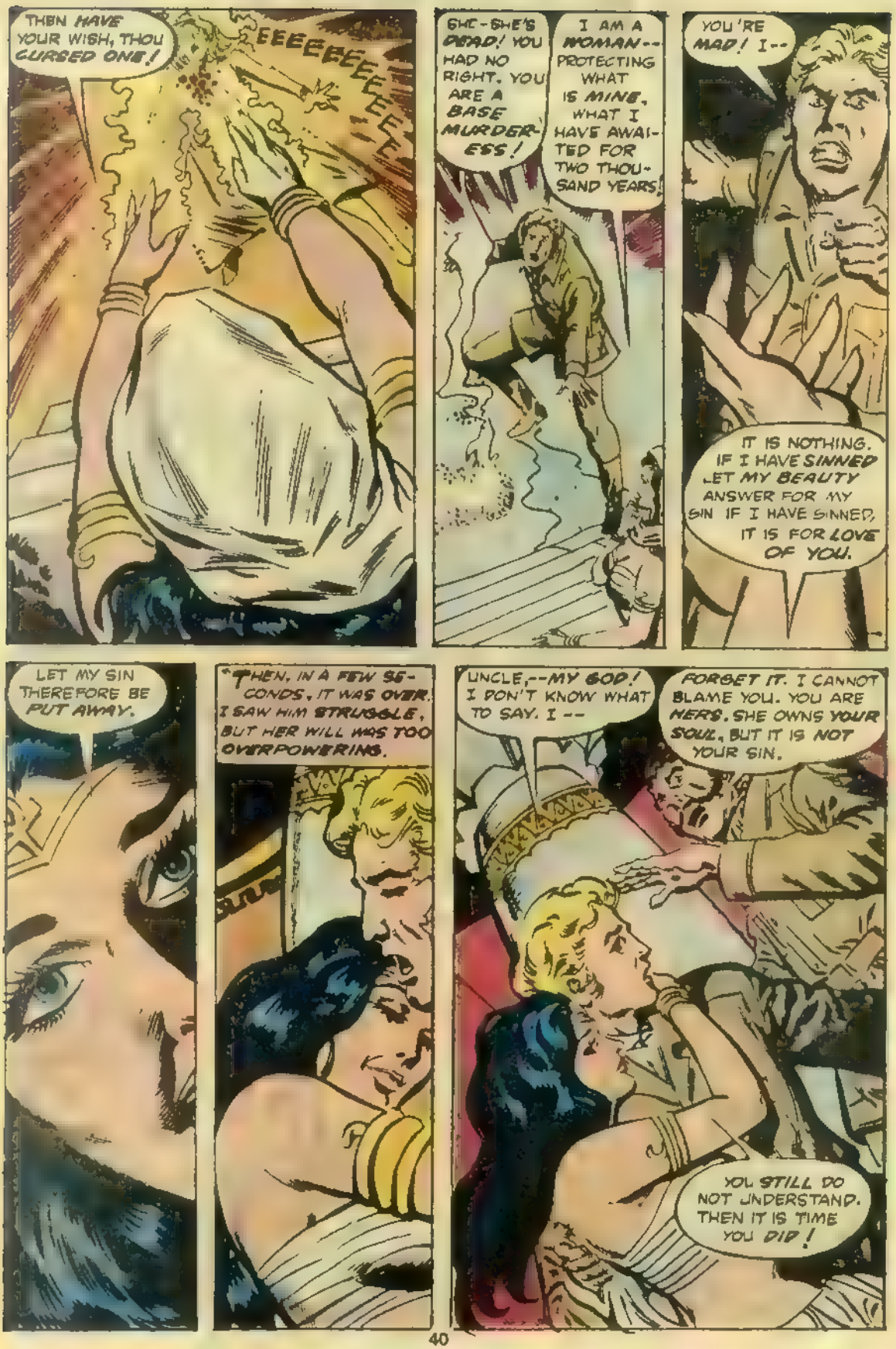
I-IT'S GHASTLY!
IT'S LIFE. THE END CAME TOO SWIFT THIS PROUD CIVILIZATION WAS LOST TO SOME UNKNOWN PESTILENCE.
THERE WAS NO TIME FOR THE LUXURY OF PRESERVING THE FLESH. BUT IT MATTERS NOT.
THOUGH SAD IT IS THAT MUCH OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE WAS LOST, THEY LIVE ON IN UNENDING REBIRTH.
BUT THERE IS MORE.
O QUEEN, I BESEECH YOU. I AM HONORED BY YOUR COMPANY AND YOUR WISDOM.
BUT I AM BESIDE MYSELF WITH WORRY FOR YOUNG LEO'S FEVER. CANNOT YOUR MAGIC DO SOMETHING?
THIS YOUNG ONE MEANS MUCH TO YOU THEN. YOUR SON?
BY ADOPTION. BUT TRULY NO MAN COULD LOVE HIS OWN FLESH MORE.
I TOLD YOU, I WORK NO MAGIC. I MERELY UNDERSTAND NATURE MORE THAN OTHERS. HERE IS WHERE I WORK.
WHY, IT SEEMS TO BE A-- CRUDE SORT OF CHEMISTRY LAB. DID THE PEOPLE OF KOR THEN...?

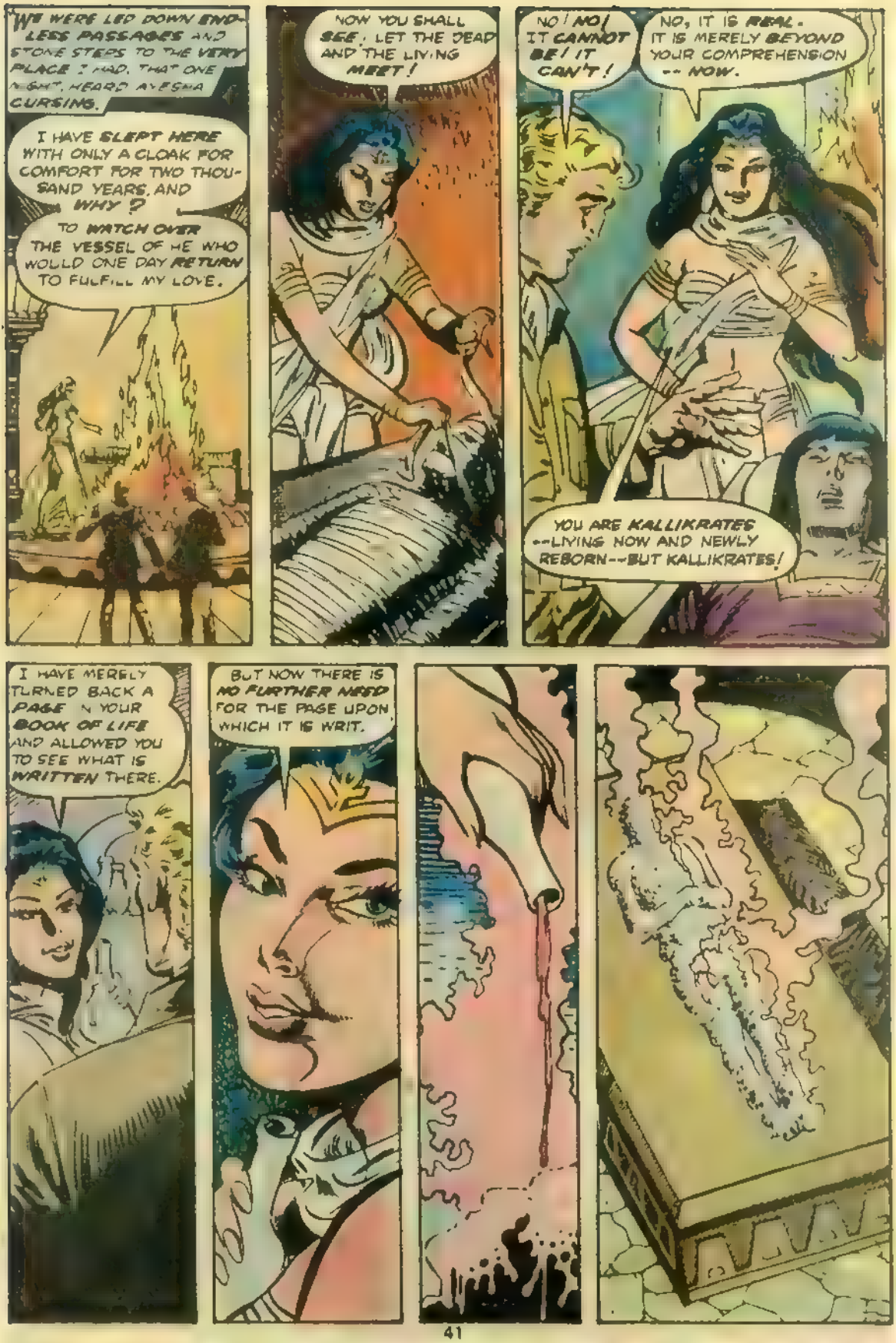
NO, THIS IS MINE, THOUGH MUCH OF WHAT I'VE LEARNED HAS COME FROM THEM.
BUT FEAR NOT, HOLLY, FOR I CAN CURE THIS LEO.
I HAD HOPED HIS FEVER WOULD PASS OF ITS OWN -- THAT IS ALWAYS BETTER.
GO. STAY BY THE YOUTH. I WILL FOLLOW SHORTLY. AND HOLLY -- CALL ME AYESHA, FOR THAT BE MY TRUE NAME.
"AND WHEN I RETURNED...
MASTER HOLLY. MY STARS, I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR YOU.
JOB! WHAT IS IT, MAN?
ALAS, I FEAR YOUNG LEO IS IN HIS DEATH THROES, THERE IS NO HOPE FOR HIM, SIR.
DEAR GOD. IF HE CAN ONLY HOLD ON, AYESHA PROMISED..
AYESHA PROMISED AND AYESHA COMES!
GOD SAVE US, MASTER! THE ANGEL COMES ALREADY TO ESCORT THE DEAD!
OH, RUBBISH, JOB. SHE IS NOTHING MORE THAN OUR HOST, THE QUEEN, WHO COMES TO SAVE LEO.
HOLLY, BID YOUR SERVANT AND THIS GIRL AWAY. I WILL NOT HAVE UNDERLINGS WITNESS MY MIRACLES.

JOB, WATCH OUTSIDE AND SEE WE ARE NOT
RIGHT!
WHAT DOES SHE WANT? SURELY IT IS MY RIGHT TO STAY WITH MY HUSBAND.
IT IS YOUR WILL TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF SHE! GO!
YOU SEE, MY HOLLY. IT WAS NEEDFUL THAT I SHOULD GIVE THESE PEOPLE A LESSON IN OBEDIENCE!
BUT NOW I SHALL SEE TO...
EEEE-YAAAHHHH!
AYESHA, WHAT IS IT? IS HE DEAD?
YOU DOG! HOW COULD YOU HAVE NOT TOLD ME. YOU KEPT HIM FROM ME!
AYESHA, I KNOW NOT OF WHAT YOU SPEAK. KEEP WHAT?
FORGIVE ME. I SUPPOSE YOU COULD NOT KNOW -- THERE LIES MY LOST KALLIKRATES!


WELL, I SHALL NOT LOSE HIM A SECOND TIME TO HESITATION. HE WILL RECOVER SHORTLY.
OH MY DEAR, SWEET KALLIKRATES, HOW I HAVE LONGED TO FEEL MARMTN IN YOUR FLESH!
"THEN DID THE PRIESTESS-QUEEN TURN AND CALL FOR HER GUARD...
THE WOMAN USTANE--FIND HER AND SLAY HER!
AYESHA, NO! YOU CAN'T!
THE EVER-MERCIFUL HOLLY! SO BE IT. SPARE THE WOMAN--BUT SEE THAT SHE IS BANISHED FROM THE CITY!
I GO NOW, HOLLY. ON THE MORROW SHALL BE A DANCE TO CELEBRATE--HIS RECOVERY.
"AND HE RECOVERED INDEED, WITH SPEED AS I HAD NEVER KNOWN. BY MORNING HE HAD FULLY HEALED.
"AYESHA AT ONCE TOOK TO WOOING HIM, TELLING HIM FALSELY THAT USTANE HAD GONE TO HER OWN PEOPLE OF HER OWN CHOICE.
"I COULD SAY NOTHING."

OF COURSE I KNEW THE 'SPELL' SHE COULD CAST OVER MEN SHE HAD REVEALED HER FACE TO LEO AND HE COULD NOT LEAVE HER SIDE.
AND THEN CAME THE DANCE. AND WHAT A SPECTACLE IT WAS, SAVAGE BEYOND ALL TIME.
BUT SUDDENLY, JARRINGLY...
STOP THIS DANCE AT ONCE!
YOU! STEP FORWARD!
USTANE!
YES, MY LORD. SHE ORDERED ME AWAY BUT I COULD NOT, FOR I LOVE YOU AND WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LIVE WITHOUT YOU!


THEN HAVE YOUR WISH, THOU CURSED ONE!
EEEEEEEEEEE
SHE-SHE'S DEAD! YOU HAD NO RIGHT. YOU ARE A BASE MURDERESS!
I AM A WOMAN-- PROTECTING WHAT IS MINE, WHAT I HAVE AWAITED FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS!
YOU'RE MAD! I--
IT IS NOTHING. IF I HAVE SINNED LET MY BEAUTY ANSWER FOR MY SIN IF I HAVE SINNED, IT IS FOR LOVE OF YOU.
LET MY SIN THEREFORE BE PUT AWAY.
"THEN, IN A FEW SECONDS, IT WAS OVER. I SAW HIM STRUGGLE, BUT HER WILL WAS TOO OVERPOWERING.
UNCLE,--MY GOD! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I --
FORGET IT. I CANNOT BLAME YOU. YOU ARE HERS. SHE OWNS YOUR SOUL, BUT IT IS NOT YOUR SIN.
YOU STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THEN IT IS TIME YOU DID!


WE WERE LED DOWN ENDLESS PASSAGES AND STONE STEPS TO THE VERY PLACE I HAD, THAT ONE NIGHT, HEARD AYESHA CURSING.
I HAVE SLEPT HERE WITH ONLY A CLOAK FOR COMFORT FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS, AND WHY?
TO WATCH OVER THE VESSEL OF HE WHO WOULD ONE DAY RETURN TO FULFILL MY LOVE.
NOW YOU SHALL SEE: LET THE DEAD AND THE LIVING MEET!
NO! NO! IT CANNOT BE! IT CAN'T!
NO, IT IS REAL. IT IS MERELY BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION -- NOW.
YOU ARE KALLIKRATES --LIVING NOW AND NEWLY REBORN--BUT KALLIKRATES!
I HAVE MERELY TURNED BACK A PAGE IN YOUR BOOK OF LIFE AND ALLOWED YOU TO SEE WHAT IS WRITTEN THERE.
BUT NOW THERE IS NO FURTHER NEED FOR THE PAGE UPON WHICH IT IS WRIT.

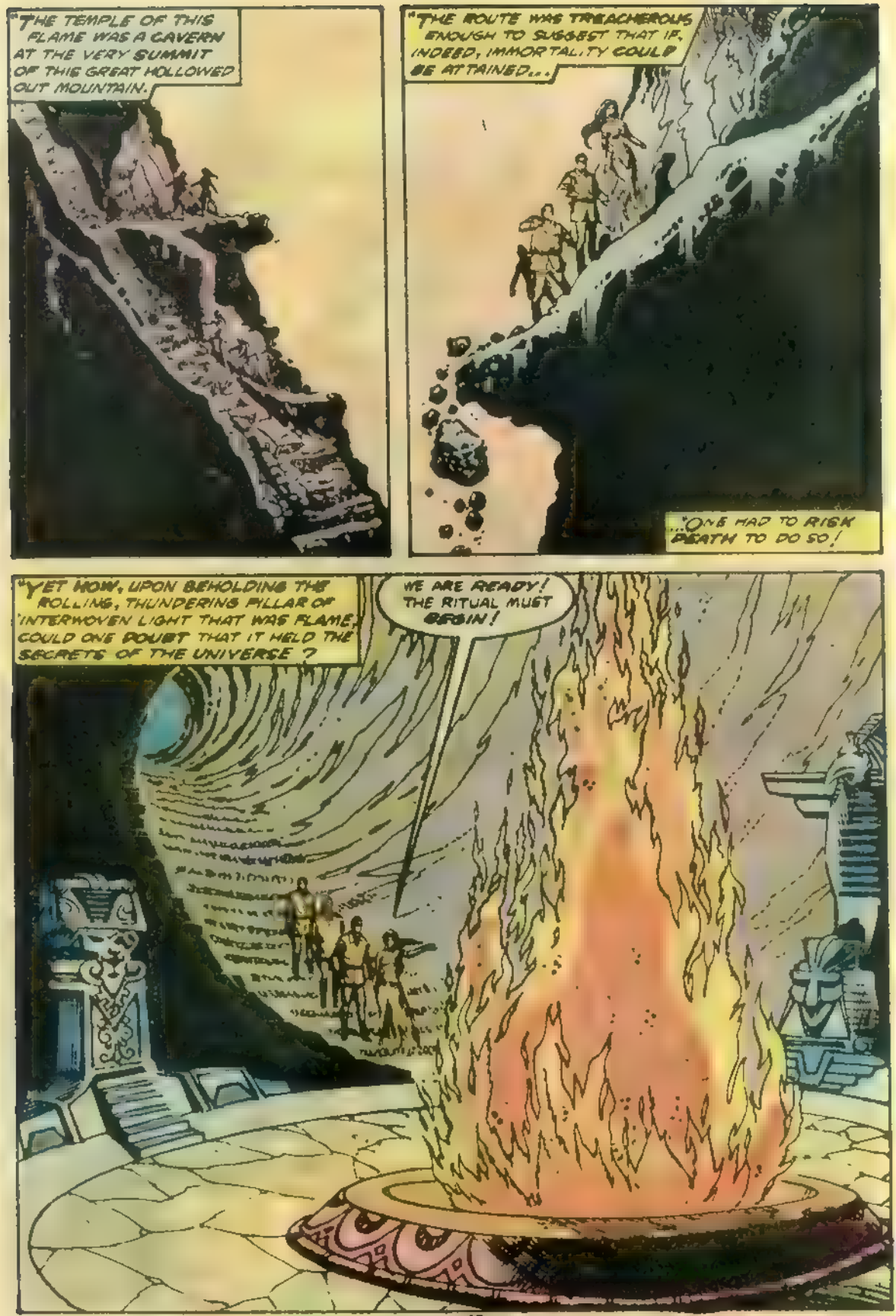
NOW GO, PREPARE. THE TIME HAS COME THAT WE BE JOINED TOGETHER, YOU AND I. AND THAT AT LONG LAST YOU TOO BE DOUSED IN THE FLAME OF LIFE.

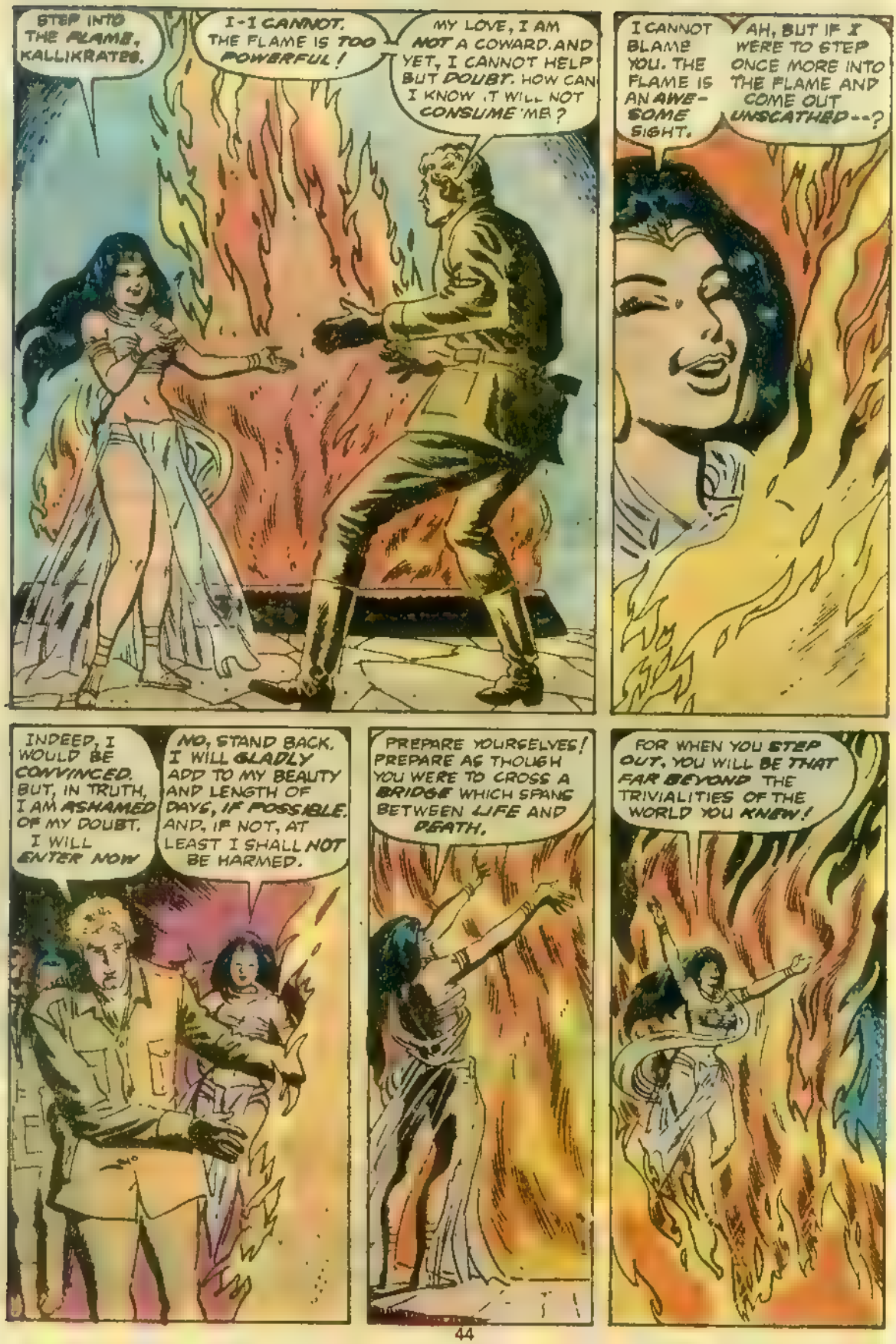
AND SO WE DID, TELLING JOE ONLY AS MUCH AS WAS NECESSARY AND NOT WORRY HIM UNDULY. HE WOULD FOLLOW US TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, GOOD FELLOW

AS FOR LEO, DO NOT BLAME HIM FOR NOT FLEEING THOUGH MESMERIZED, HE DID IN HIS OWN WAY LOVE AYESHA.
"AND WHO, GIVEN WHAT FATE HAD DELIVERED TO HIM, WOULD TURN THEIR BACKS ON IT.

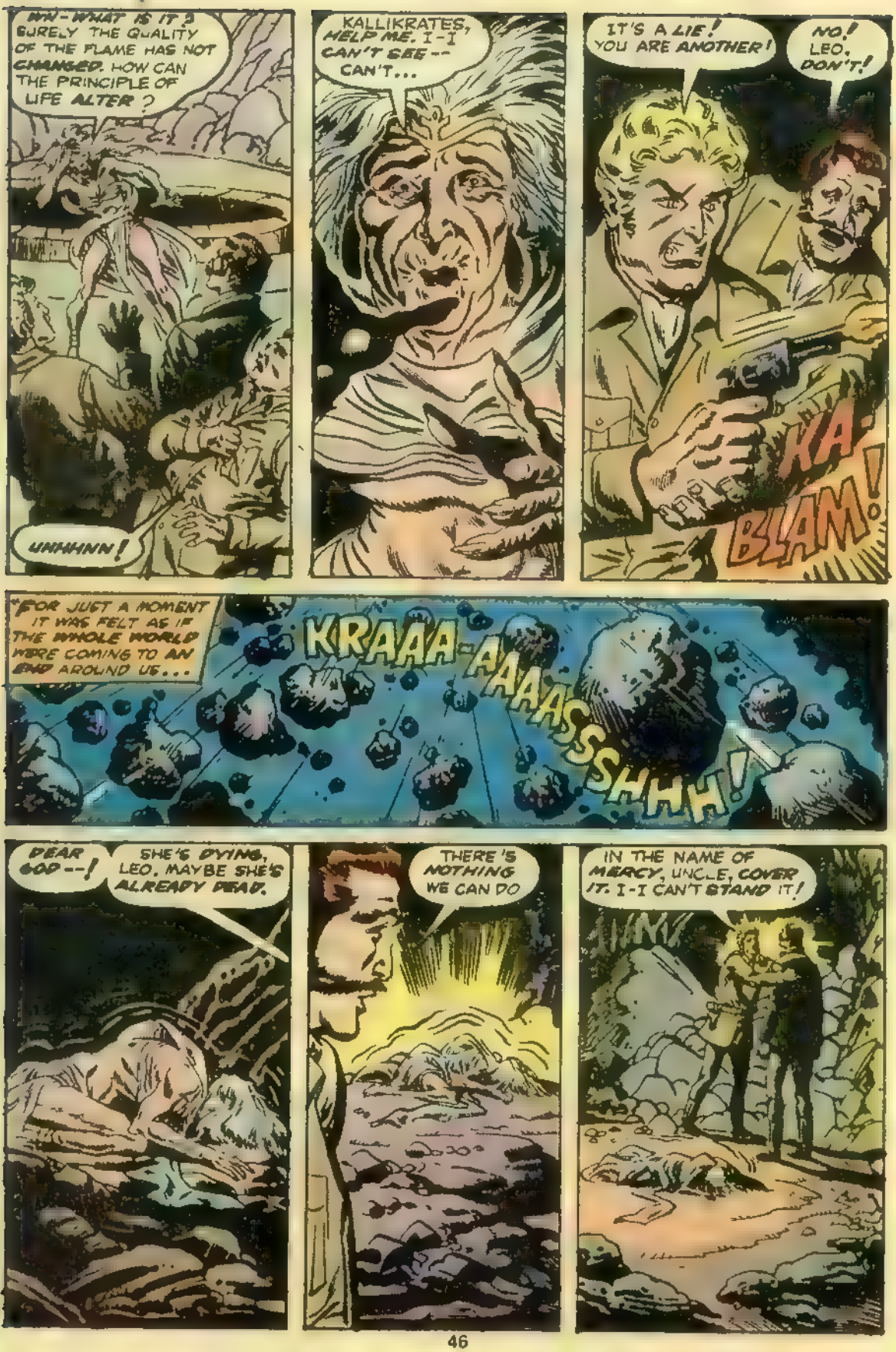
AND I ? I HAD BEEN LEO'S GUARDIAN FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS I WOULD NOT STOP NOW !

"AND SO WE HEADED UP BEYOND THE CITY OF KOR TO THE VERY HEIGHTS OF THE MOUNTAIN ITSELF --TO THE PLACE OF THE FLAME OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE!
"YET, STRANGELY, I FELT AS IF LIFE WERE ABOUT TO END!


"THE TEMPLE OF THIS FLAME WAS A CAVERN AT THE VERY SUMMIT OF THIS GREAT HOLLOWED OUT MOUNTAIN.
"THE ROUTE WAS TREACHEROUS ENOUGH TO SUGGEST THAT IF, INDEED, IMMORTALITY COULD BE ATTAINED...
...ONE HAD TO RISK DEATH TO DO SO!
"YET NOW, UPON BEHOLDING THE ROLLING, THUNDERING PILLAR OF INTERWOVEN LIGHT THAT WAS FLAME, COULD ONE DOUBT THAT IT HELD THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE ?
WE ARE READY! THE RITUAL MUST BEGIN!

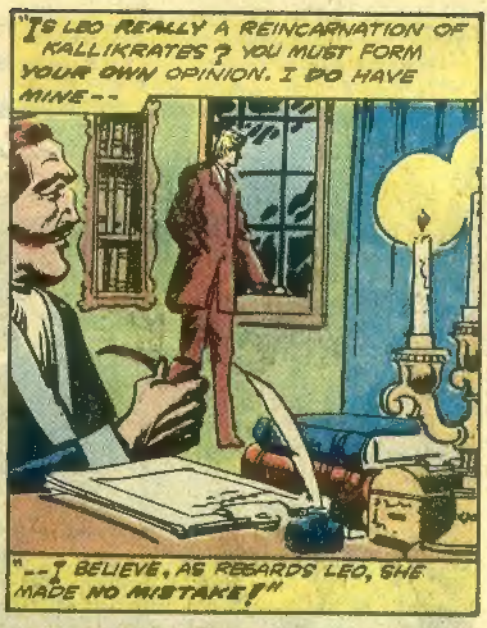

STEP INTO THE FLAME, KALLIKRATES.
I-I CANNOT. THE FLAME IS TOO POWERFUL!
MY LOVE, I AM NOT A COWARD. AND YET, I CANNOT HELP BUT DOUBT. HOW CAN I KNOW IT WILL NOT CONSUME ME?
I CANNOT BLAME YOU. THE FLAME IS AN AWE-SOME SIGHT.
AH, BUT IF I WERE TO STEP ONCE MORE INTO THE FLAME AND COME OUT UNSCATHED--?
INDEED, I WOULD BE CONVINCED. BUT, IN TRUTH, I AM ASHAMED OF MY DOUBT. I WILL ENTER NOW
NO, STAND BACK. I WILL GLADLY ADD TO MY BEAUTY AND LENGTH OF DAYS, IF POSSIBLE. AND, IF NOT, AT LEAST I SHALL NOT BE HARMED.
PREPARE YOURSELVES! PREPARE AS THOUGH YOU WERE TO CROSS A BRIDGE WHICH SPANS BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.
FOR WHEN YOU STEP OUT, YOU WILL BE THAT FAR BEYOND THE TRIVIALITIES OF THE WORLD YOU KNEW!

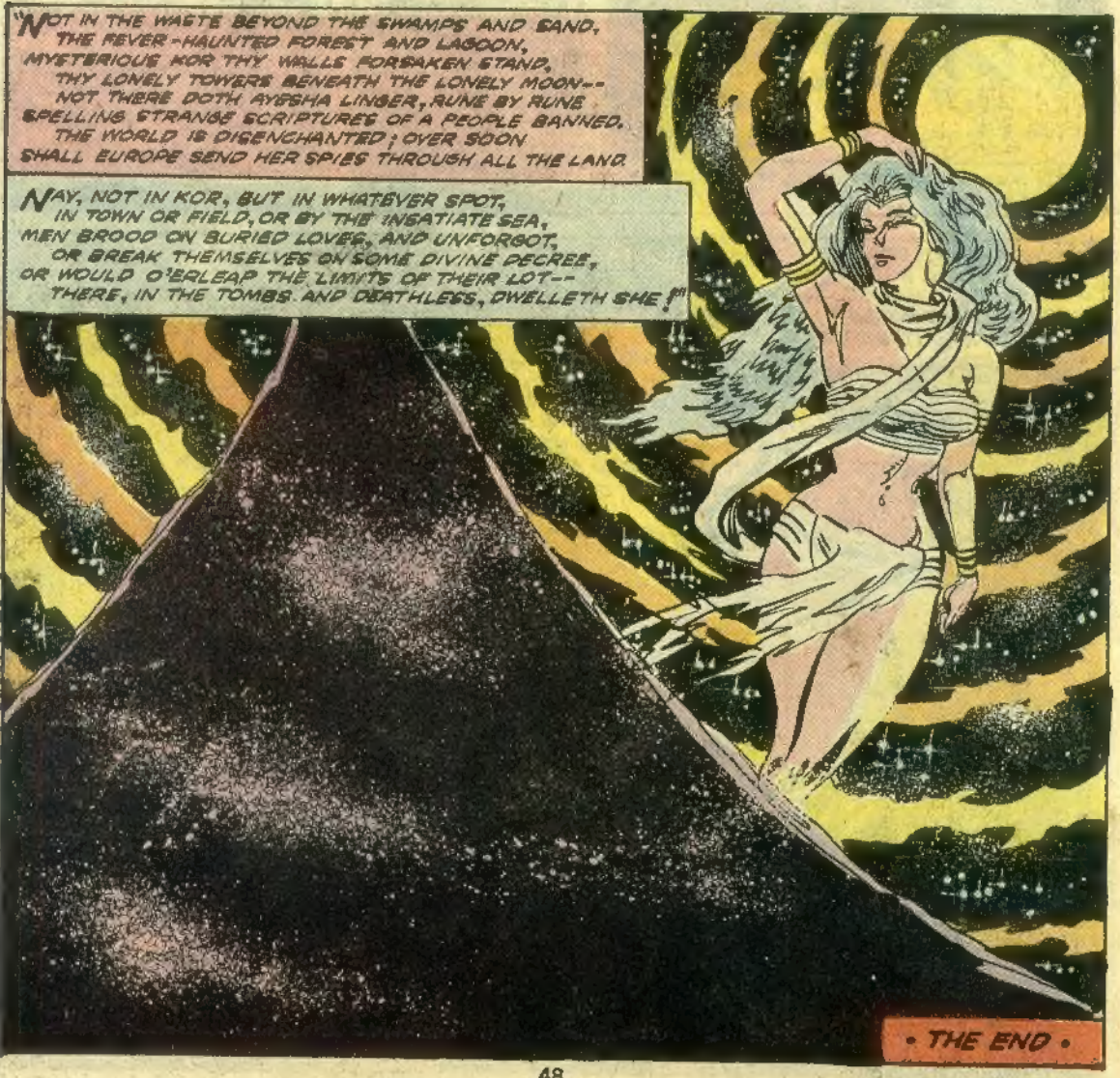
AYESHA STEPPED INTO THE FLAME. IT LAPPED AROUND HER AND I SAW THE ESSENCE RUN UP HER FORM.
"I SAW HER LIFT IT WITH BOTH HANDS AS THOUGH IT WERE WATER. I EVEN SAW HER OPEN HER MOUTH AND DRAW IT INTO HER LUNGS.
"BUT SUDDENLY--MORE SUDDENLY THAN I CAN EXPRESS--AN INDESCRIBABLE CHANGE CAME OVER HER.
"THE SMILE VANISHED AND IN ITS STEAD THERE CREPT A DRY, HARD LOOK--
"--THE ROUNDED FACE SEEMED TO GROW MORE PINCHED. THE EYES TOO LOST THEIR GLOW.
"AND THEN THE FLAMES DIED!
KALLIKRATES!


NN-WHAT IS IT? SURELY THE QUALITY OF THE FLAME HAS NOT CHANGED. HOW CAN THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE ALTER?
UNHHHNN!
KALLIKRATES, HELP ME. I-I CAN'T SEE-- CAN'T...
IT'S A LIE! YOU ARE ANOTHER!
NO! LEO, DON'T!
KA-BLAM!
"FOR JUST A MOMENT IT WAS FELT AS IF THE WHOLE WORLD WERE COMING TO AN END AROUND US...
KRAAA-AAAASSHHH!
DEAR GOD--!
SHE'S DYING, LEO. MAYBE SHE'S ALREADY DEAD.
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO
IN THE NAME OF MERCY, UNCLE, COVER IT. I-I CAN'T STAND IT!

"WHAT HAD BROUGHT THIS SHOCKING CHANGE ABOUT? HAD THE LIFE-GIVING NATURE OF THE FLAME VARIED?
"OR WAS IT THAT A BODY, ONCE CHARGED, COULD NOT REPEAT THE PROCESS?
UNCLE! QUICKLY!
"BUT, WHATEVER HAPPENED, IT WAS DECISIVE--AND FINAL!
DEAD! IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE OLD BOY. PERHAPS HE IS THE WISEST OF US ALL.
WE STILL HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY OUT OF HERE. HE'S FOUND HIS.
BUT LOOK--THE ROCKSLIDE CREATED OUR EXIT!
FINE, LAD. WE ESCAPE THE MOUNTAIN. BUT, UNLESS MY EYES DECEIVE ME, THAT IS NOT CAMBRIDGE SPREADING OUT BEFORE US.
WE HAVE THE VAST INTERIOR OF AN UNEXPLORED CONTINENT TO TRY TO FIND OUR WAY THROUGH, PROVIDING WE AREN'T ATTACKED BY MAN OR ANIMALS OR FEVER!
BUT THEN, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR IT, WOT?

"FOR THE REST, IT IS OF NO INTEREST TO SCIENCE OR THE OUTSIDE WORLD. WE FINALLY, AFTER MANY TRIALS, SET FOOT IN SOUTHHAMPTON.
"WE THEN RETURNED TO THE ROOMS AT CAMBRIDGE.


"IS LEO REALLY A REINCARNATION OF KALLIKRATES? YOU MUST FORM YOUR OWN OPINION. I DO HAVE MINE--
"--I BELIEVE, AS REGARDS LEO, SHE MADE NO MISTAKE!"


"NOT IN THE WASTE BEYOND THE SWAMPS AND SAND,
THE FEVER-HAUNTED FOREST AND LAGOON,
MYSTERIOUS KOR THY WALLS FORSAKEN STAND,
THY LONELY TOWERS BENEATH THE LONELY MOON--
NOT THERE DOTH AYESHA LINGER, RUNE BY RUNE
SPELLING STRANGE SCRIPTURES OF A PEOPLE BANNED.
THE WORLD IS DISENCHANTED; OVER SOON
SHALL EUROPE SEND HER SPIES THROUGH ALL THE LAND.
NAY, NOT IN KOR, BUT IN WHATEVER SPOT,
IN TOWN OR FIELD, OR BY THE INSATIATE SEA,
MEN BROOD ON BURIED LOVES, AND UNFORGOT,
OR BREAK THEMSELVES ON SOME DIVINE DECREE,
OR WOULD O'ERLEAP THE LIMITS OF THEIR LOT--
THERE, IN THE TOMBS AND DEATHLESS, DWELLETH SHE!"
• THE END •

H. Rider Haggard

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